

House calls by energy 'doctors' could save millions

If some energy experts have their way, an army of "house doctors" will be making calls at America's 70 million homes over the next few years, prescribing remedies for excessive energy consumption.

Using infrared heat detectors, large fans, and "smoke pencils," a team of Princeton University house doctors already has been visiting test homes to diagnose air leaks, some types unknown until recently. They have recommended everything from caulking, weatherstripping, additional insulation, and storm windows to replacing or overhauling furnaces.

THE PRINCETON researchers contend that a nationwide house-doctor program would cut home-heating demands in half and save the equivalent of two-thirds of our Arab oil imports. They estimate that a commercial house-doctor visit and quick fix would cost \$200 to \$400 and lower heating bills 15 to 20 percent.

Conservation coupled with more efficient use of energy may be the easiest and quickest way out of the current oil crisis. "Many experts now say that, using existing technology, we can cut energy use dramatically and live just as well, if not better," reports Rick Gore in the National Geographic's special issue on energy.

"We've already begun to conserve, thanks largely to the rising price of fuels. Our gasoline use has dropped about 11 percent since 1978. Growth of electrical demand has slowed sharply. Industry has cut its use of all energy 14 percent per unit of output since 1973."

In travels throughout the United States, Gore discovered thousands of inventive energy pioneers already at work conserving existing sources of energy and finding new ones. Determined to live as well or better on less, they are doing everything from building windmills to burning walnut shells.

In Vermont, general-store owner Dan Fraser has stacked more than 100

cords of wood in his backyard — one of the biggest personal woodpiles in New England. "I figure I can either burn wood or send my money to some damn fellow in the Midwest," he told Gore. To Fraser, "too much wood is just enough."

Across the country in Washington, a dozen commuters hop into the same van and ferry to Seattle, together saving an estimated 27,000 gallons of gas a year as well as part of their transportation expenses.

IN COLORADO, Jon Mulford's house, overlooking the Rockies was built to incorporate the sun and earth into its energy-saving design. Using passive solar techniques that do not require collector panels or elaborate plumbing, the house itself is designed to trap and store the sun's heat in winter and reject it in summer. The earth also helps conserve because the house is built partly underground, where temperatures be-

low the surface remain moderate year-round.

At the Tennessee Valley Authority — the nation's largest electricity producer — Chairman David Freeman has stopped construction on four of 14 nuclear reactors and turned to conservation and solar energy instead.

An innovative TVA conservation program, similar to one developed by utilities in Oregon, informs customers of conservation measures that are economically feasible and provides a list of approved contractors.

TVA pays the contractor once the work is completed and inspected, and the customers pay TVA back in installments, interest free, on monthly bills. For the typical all-electric customer, the savings in electricity just about equals the monthly charge.

In Idaho, which sits on top of geysers, Boise officials are taking advantage of the geothermal potential at their doorstep. It is estimated that at least a third of the city's buildings

could be heated geothermally.

"As valuable to our country and economy as conservation is," Gore points out, "it often costs more money than most people, companies, and utilities — many of which face serious financial problems — can muster. How do we raise the capital we need?"

INNOVATIVE RATE schemes or bond issues could help channel conservation money through the utilities, he reports. Or Congress, which encourages private investors to underwrite oil and gas exploration through generous tax breaks, could offer similar breaks to those who put up capital for conservation.

In industry, many plants are using their own waste products to make both

electricity and heat together — termed "cogeneration."

At the Diamond Walnut Growers' facility in California, for example, the leftover shells are crushed, producing 35,000 tons of coarse brown powder each year. Once sold as poultry bedding and toy fillings, the shells are now burned in boilers that warm the plant and generate three times the electricity it needs.

At the world's largest garbage dump — five stories high on New York's Staten Island — bacteria are turning old buried garbage into methane — enough gas to eventually supply 16,000 homes. Brooklyn gas officials claim that their product will be "just as good as what comes out of the well in west Texas."

Scouts pick regional chief

Roland Wilkening of Bloomfield Hills, vice chairman and secretary of the Barrow-Majors Co., was elected to a two-year term as president of the East Central Region, Boy Scouts of America.

He will lead 750,000 Scouts and 300,000 volunteers consisting of 25,000 units of Cub packs, Scout troops and Explorer posts in Michigan, Ohio, Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa and West Virginia.

"The Boy Scout product is better than ever. Never in our history have

community organizations and groups been more concerned about the development and preparation of our youth for citizenship and the improvement of their physical and mental fitness," Wilkening said after his election last week.

"Our challenge is to identify and communicate the benefits of the Scouting program to serve the needs of charter organizations. Historically, these chartering organizations have come to recognize the Scouting program as an integral part of their service to the community."

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