

Energy auditor appreciates help

If you haven't received your energy audit yet, I have a few suggestions that might make the audit easier.

Call both your electric and gas utilities and find out your energy consumption by month for the last year. If you have scheduled an audit through Consumers Power, for instance, the auditor will have energy consumption figures for Consumers. But he will also need figures from Detroit Edison, if that is your electric utility.

Just call the number listed in your telephone book and explain that you will soon have an energy audit and you need your energy use per month for the last year. The auditor will use these figures to establish your energy use patterns.

BY COMPARING kilowatts, therms, gallons of oil, etc., the auditor gets a true picture. Inflation, increased prices, fuel adjustment allowances and taxes clutter up the picture if all you have is the size of the bills you paid.

If you haven't already, you might want to take your energy usage figures and make a graph. It will show you when you are using money. You can supply the why.

Make sure the auditor can get to your attic and look inside. This may mean moving boxes of stored Christmas decorations, so don't do this until you know when the auditor is coming.

He also will need to get to the furnace and hot water heater. Unless you regularly drain a gallon of water from your hot water heater or change your furnace filter, they are probably cluttered up.

IT HELPS to have a flashlight on hand. Granted, the auditor should bring one, but he may need additional light.

After the auditor completes an inspection of your house, he will need the telephone for a half hour. The auditor connects a data transmitter to the telephone line and feeds a main computer all the figures for your house. The computer then reads back the amount of energy saved by each improvement in insulation, the cost if done by you and the price if done by a contractor.

Make sure no gates are locked. The auditor will want to measure the size of your house from the outside.

He also will want to measure the size of some rooms.

The most anticlimactic moment is when the auditor has completed all the measuring of your home. He then sits down with a pocket calculator and does a lot of math. After a half hour or so of calculating, he'll want to use the phone.

BUT THAT can be kind of fun. The computer he is communicating



energy
Barry Jensen

ing with actually talks... well, it "reads off" numbers in a voice that sounds just like you'd imagine a Swedish computer would sound.

After he has all his numbers in the proper places, the auditor will tell you what the computer has calculated will be the best ways to spend your energy conservation dollars. He will also show you the worst places to spend your money.

In our house, the best investment would be in a blanket around the hot water heater. Unfortunately, because of its placement, we have to choose between insulating the existing hot water heater or being able to change the filter on the furnace. We would rather be able to change the furnace filter.

The worst place to spend money would be on a new furnace — it would take more than 25 years for a new furnace to pay for itself. In the middle is adding still more insulation to the ceiling.

FOR \$10, not only do you get a survey, you get a bag of goodies. In this bag are a roll of duct tape, gaskets to eliminate the air leaks around electrical outlets, rope caulk, clear insulating tape and two water flow restrictors.

All the energy conservation publications say you should have flow restrictors. All the energy conservation publications say such restrictors are cheap and can be found at any hardware store.

All the energy conservation publications are wrong. The little disks are hard to find.

Before the energy auditor comes, you should write down all the questions you have relating to energy conservation. It's too easy to forget a question when you are thinking about what the auditor has suggested.



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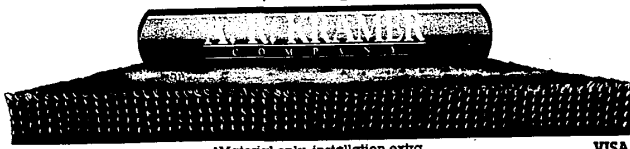
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