## Audits succeed in saving energy

"If I couldn't save a homeowner \$100 to \$150 a year off his utility bills, I wouldn't be doing the audit," said Ron Wrublewali.
Wrublewali of Livonia is a trained energy auditor employed by Brothers Energy Resources and the said of the contract basis for Detroit Edison and Michigan Consolidated Gas Co.
Based on estimates compiled by the Michigan Energy Administration, the utility cost savings Wrublewall mentions for audited households are possible. Statewide, however, most savings are in the \$45-85 ballpark.
The audit process is conducted under a federally mandated plan called the Residential Conservation Service (RUS) program. Its alm: to promote energy cost reductions for customers using natural gas and electricity.

THE PROGRAM works like thix.

For a fee of \$10 (free to qualifying low-income households), an energy auditor will come into a home and conduct a walk-through survey of the internot building envelop. Looks at the furnace, hot water tank and plumbing systems are included.

Based on the findings, the auditor will recommend energy-saving improvements. These are ranked with the aid of an on-site computer analysis according to costs and projected savings. Customers are also given an explanation of financial assistance savialble through the utility and a list of local contractors who can do the work.

THE ONE- TO two-bour visit above people that they don't have have to spend \$100 to \$1,000 to gain control over energy costs, Wubbershi said.

"They learn that the return on a relatively small investment is very good."

Michigan lends the nation in completed audits, with a total of nearly 400,000 visits. The energy cost savings from the two-year-old program have been documented in a study by the Michigan Energy Administration dentitled "Tuel Consumption Impacts of the Michigan Energy Administration dentited "Tuel Consumption in pacts of the Michigan ENG Program" by Marty Kushler.

Comparing fuel consumption of audited and non-audited bouseholds over the same time period, figures above both groups have reduced energy usage, yet the audited group of households has saved more.

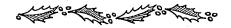
In 1931-2, the first year of the program, the study shows a difference of 55-percent savings between the monitored groups. A year later, the difference in savings had increased to 4 percent.

cent.
"THE EVALUATION results surprised many people," said Reg Whalon, staff engineer for the state Public Service Commission, the agency that oversees the RCS program. "No one expected to see the difference in the rate of savings increase." Whalon credits the savings to the educational aspects of the audit, particularly the computer-derived payback analysis.
"People learn the most cost-effective measures they can do to reduce energy consumplion. In the process, they become smarter investors," he said. The 397,900 audits conducted between June 1981 and August 1983 rep-

resent a savings of \$18 million per year for customers of participating utilities, Whaloo said.
That amounts to \$45 per audit.
CASH OUTLAYS for this savings effort are another matter.
The \$10 charge for a home energy audit does not reflect the true cost of each visit. When administration and advertings costs are included, the tab is about \$130 per wisit. To date, the expenditures for the entire suit program are running just over \$20 million per year.

The costs of the RCS effort are paid from a uniform surcharge to all inetered kales of gas and electricity of participating utilities. "The program will pay for itself in less than three years — probably quicker if present prices are any indication of rate treads," Whalon said.

Could the RCS program be more effective and bring higher energy cost reductions? The second part of this series will explore some home energy audit options that promise greater savings for homeowners.



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And to see the colorul decorations.

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