

AN AUDIT THAT PAYS

Thanks to rising utility costs and environmental concerns, “energy audit” is a term you’re going to be hearing more of. What is an energy audit and why may it matter to you?

An energy audit is an attic-to-basement assessment of your house’s energy efficiency, detailing how it uses energy, revealing problem areas where energy is being wasted and identifying improvements you could make to better its energy efficiency, and helping to prioritize those improvements.

You can audit your home yourself or hire a professional energy auditor to do it for you. An auditor will probably begin by discussing with you any concerns you might have (e.g., your energy costs, comfort, or health), asking you about how you live and use energy, and reviewing your past utility bills.

The auditor should then conduct a walkthrough of your house, assessing things like insulation levels, ventilation, appliances, windows and doors, water flow, and heating, cooling and electrical systems. The auditor will likely use infrared technology to evaluate insulation and conduct what’s known as a “blower door test” to determine air tightness. The audit should address health and safety concerns like air quality and carbon monoxide levels.

The benefits of energy audits are numerous – provided, of course, you implement even some of the recommended improvements. You’ll lower your greenhouse-gas emissions, be more comfortable in your home and, possibly, experience improved health. Your house will run more efficiently, costing less money each month, which will boost its resale value. Plus, you may be entitled to rebates and other financial incentives to help offset the cost of the audit and the improvements you implement.