

Home Energy Audits

Performing a **home energy audit** is the first step toward **reducing utility costs** and making your home more comfortable.

What's an audit?

Audits, or energy assessments, are examinations of a home's exterior construction or envelope and the systems within the home. Audits measure the amount of energy a property uses and identify why and where energy is being lost. Frequent causes of energy loss are leaky windows, a poorly sealed attic, ductwork tears, and invisible cracks.

How audits work

Professional auditors rely on various tools, including blower door tests and thermographic inspections, to examine the whole house and its systems to discover where there's air infiltration or loss; pinpoint hidden, hard-to-reach spots where insulation is lacking or failing; and assess performance of a home's systems.

The tests require three to four hours. An auditor uses the and other data about your heating and cooling habits and utility costs to identify the home improvement projects that will boost a home's efficiency.

Tip: Watch Home Diagnosis, homediagnosis.tv to see how audits work.

Benefits

By making recommended upgrades following a home energy assessment, homeowners can save between 5% and 30% on energy bills, according to the U.S. Department of Energy.

And repairs aren't always costly. For instance, some upgrades, such as air sealing and insulation, can be completed using a DIY approach.

For examples, visit energystar.gov or energy.gov.

Prepare for an audit

List your home's problems, including drafty spaces, hot rooms, and sweaty windows. Be prepared to give copies of your utility bills to your auditor.

They'll also want to know your habits, including:

- The number of residents living in the house and whether people are home during the day.
- Average thermostat settings for summer and winter and during the daytime and evenings.
- Unused rooms.

Costs

The cost of a professional audit depends on a home's size and location, and it's often possible to get free or low-cost audits through your utility company. You also could hire a certified RESNET Home Energy Rater.

Locate professionals

For auditors and energy experts, contact:

- Building Performance Institute, bpi.org.
 - ENERGY STAR®, energystar.gov.
 - Residential Energy Services Network (RESNET), hersindex.com/find-a-hers-rater.
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REALTORS® who have earned NAR's Green Designation can refer you to local experts who can assess your home's performance. Learn more at www.green.realtor.

