

BRING ENERGY AWARENESS MONTH TO YOUR CUSTOMERS

“Our children will enjoy in their homes electrical energy too cheap to meter.”

– Lewis Lichtenstein Strauss, 1954

October is Energy Awareness Month. If Lewis Strauss had been right, October might have been something like National Pumpkin Month. (What? It actually is National Pumpkin Month?) But as we head into another heating season, electricity and most every other conventional energy source is anything but “too cheap to meter.”

It’s fair to say that the awareness of energy and how it affects everything we do has grabbed the spotlight over the last year, and there is no lack of information, both good and bad, on how to save it. As it relates to the building industry, efficient use of energy crosses over between business operation and building product. So this might be a good time to review some of the areas of opportunity for saving a Btu or two.

Efficiency can and should be practiced at the office as well as integrated in the home. An increased awareness and understanding of responsible energy use doesn’t shut down on your way out the door, so efficiency at the office should be encouraged as a core value. **Here are some office reminders:**

➤ **Where possible, replace incandescent light bulbs** with compact fluorescent lights. This one change can affect the direct lighting bill and reduce waste heat that has to be removed with the cooling system.

➤ **Use ENERGY STAR® office equipment with added features** like standby mode, which reduces wasted electricity. Turn off equipment and unplug electricity-sucking devices that are not in use. (Get familiar with the power strip “off” switch.)

➤ **Reduce/reuse/recycle.** Form a Green Team to focus on resource reduction and efficiency. See if your waste service offers single-stream recycling to make separation of items a thing of the past.

➤ **Make your office energy policy part of your company’s story** to your customers. Builders who have taken high-performance green building seriously shouldn’t be shy about highlighting a green business ethic.

If it hasn’t happened already from the increased public awareness of energy prices, put energy on the top of the listed features of your homes. And take advantage of the credibility of Built Green® Colorado to promote the better energy performance. Built Green® University has been scheduled for November, where you’ll get some of the best energy-efficiency training in these parts for what works best. Here are a few Built Green® energy points that should be part of your basic package:

➤ **Design, design, design.** OK, I sound like a broken record. But if there is an opportunity to design for using the sun to a home’s advantage (and this happens more than you might think), use it. These “sun-tempered designs” can make a huge difference in the energy performance of a home. Spend some time with this one; it’s worth it.

➤ **Pay attention to properly installed insulation and a well-sealed structure,** including mastic-sealed ductwork. Get what you pay for with your insulation package. Check the quality either with a well-trained field staff or with a competent energy rater.

➤ **Where possible, use only ENERGY STAR® appliances.** This is pretty close to a no-brainer.

➤ **Keep the indoor air clean and fresh.** Get combustion byproducts out of the interior with sealed combustion gas appliances, and introduce fresh air in an efficient way to your tight new home. Also, avoid finish materials (paints, glues, etc.) that add pollutants to the inside. 🏠

Doug Seiter contributes to this publication on environmental building and energy-efficiency issues. He is the former state coordinator for Built Green® Colorado. Email Doug at dlseiter@comcast.net.

HEATING SEASON

October is a great time to get the energy-efficiency banner on your new homes. The 2008-2009 heating season is just around the corner, and the affordability of staying comfortable is going to be on the minds of your customers. So, if you can tear yourself away from National Pumpkin Month activities, don’t let this promotional opportunity pass you by!



◀ DOUG SEITER