



Home Owner Energy Efficiency Resource Guide

Save Money and Reduce your Carbon Footprint

The Chicago Climate Action Plan released by the City of Chicago has identified buildings as being responsible for 70% of greenhouse gas emissions due to energy used to heat and cool our homes and offices. By making our homes more energy efficient, we can take a big step towards reducing our impact on the environment and save money at the same time. Those who have retrofits performed on their homes can expect to see a return on investment for residential energy efficiency improvements of 12.5 – 30 percent! Below is a list of some the resources that can help you identify and fund energy saving changes that can be made to your home including: government programs, utility rebates, tax incentives, and home energy auditors that can help get you started.

CEDA Weatherization Program

For low-income families in the City of Chicago and suburban Cook County, the Cook County Community and Economic Development Association (CEDA) offers a weatherization program as well as an energy assistance program. CEDA's Weatherization Program provides for the repair or replacement of furnaces, installation of heat-saving insulation, sealing bypasses, as well as installation of home safety measures. The website for these programs, which contains the requirements as well as the locations for applying, is contained in the following link:
<http://www.cedaorg.net/www2/EnergyConservation.html>

The U.S. Department of Energy provides the funding to CEDA and other agency providers in Illinois. The following link contains a profile of Illinois weatherization recipients available on their website:
http://apps1.eere.energy.gov/weatherization/state_activities_detail.cfm/state_abbr=il

Tax Incentives

For those who don't qualify for CEDA's Weatherization Program there are tax credits available for the purchase of energy efficiency saving home improvements, such as Energy Star windows and doors, insulation, HVAC, etc... The recently passed stimulus bill (The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009) increased the levels of these energy efficiency tax credits. The tax credits previously effective for 2009 have been extended to 2010, and the amount of the credit has been raised from 10% to 30%.

Tax credits at 30% of the cost, up to \$1500 are available for windows and doors, insulation, roofs, HVAC, water heaters and biomass stoves. Tax credits of 30% of the cost with no upper limit are available for geothermal heat pumps, solar panels, solar water heaters, small wind energy systems and fuel cells. Installation costs are covered for many of these items. See the

following link to the Energy Star website for a summary of items covered and more explanation of these tax credits:

http://apps1.eere.energy.gov/weatherization/state_activities_detail.cfm/state_abbrev=il

Another useful website for information on making use of the above federal income tax incentives is the Tax Incentives Assistance Project: <http://www.energytaxincentives.org/consumers/>

Energy Efficiency Rebates

The Chicagoland Natural Gas Savings Program, funded by customers of Peoples Gas and North Shore Gas, provides another opportunity for homeowners to receive some immediate rewards for installing energy-efficient improvements. The program offers rebates on certain types of energy-efficient furnaces, boilers, water heaters, insulation and clothes washers purchased between December 15, 2008 and April 30, 2009. (This may be extended so check for updates on the Chicago Group of the Sierra Club website.)

The maximum rebate amounts are: \$750 for insulation, \$600 for boilers, \$450 for furnaces, \$400 for water heaters and \$100 for clothes washers.

For more information, including how to apply, see the following link:

http://www.conservationrebates.com/programs/chi/CHI_Index.aspx

Cook County Energy Savers Program

The Energy Savers program, by CNT Energy, provides assistance to owners of multi-family rental buildings for the purpose of energy efficiency upgrades. The program offers complete energy assessments (energy audits) with specific energy recommendations, financing options for implementing recommendations, assistance coordinating tax benefits and energy credits, and more. More information can be found at the program website:

<http://www.cntenergy.org/energy-savers.php>

Historic Chicago Bungalow Initiative

Chicago bungalow owners have the opportunity to make their homes more energy efficient through grants offered by the Historic Chicago Bungalow Association.

As part of the program a weatherization contractor will provide a free energy assessment of your home to determine the most cost effective improvements. Improvements include air-sealing, weather stripping, attic/basement insulation, furnace/boiler replacement, water heater replacement, etc...

The one-time energy savers grant can reimburse bungalow owners for 75% of the project, up to \$6,000, for energy efficiency improvements.

See the HCBA website for more details:

http://www.chicagobungalow.org/pages/energy_savers_grants/30.php

Home Energy Auditors

Though resources are available to homeowners for do-it-yourself efficiency improvements (such as this guide available at the Energy Star website:

http://www.energystar.gov/index.cfm?c=home_sealing.hm_improvement_sealing) a professional home energy audit is often the best way for identifying the most cost-effective means of improving a home's energy efficiency.

A professional home energy auditor will use specialized, diagnostic tools such as a blower door test, infrared cameras, smoke puffers and surface thermometers to find leaks and drafts. After performing an audit they can provide a list of recommendations for cost-effective energy improvements as well as trustworthy contractors to fit your needs. Such an audit may cost around \$400 and take 4-5 hours, but the savings in pinpointing energy leaks and not wasting money on unnecessary repairs can be substantial.

A listing of energy auditors in Illinois can be found at the Illinois Association of Energy Raters website: <http://www.ilenergyraters.org/HomeEnergyRaters.htm>

Some questions to consider in choosing an energy auditor can be found at the eZing, website: <http://www.ezing.pro/choosingyourauditor.html>

For a helpful guide on practical ways of improving your home energy efficiency, as well as advice in conducting home energy audits, see the US Department of Energy's Energy Savers Booklet: http://www1.eere.energy.gov/consumer/tips/pdfs/energy_savers.pdf

The Energy Star website also offers several tools for help in performing do-it-yourself audits or hiring a professional home energy auditor.

http://www.energystar.gov/index.cfm?c=home_improvement.hm_improvement_audits

One of these tools is the Energy Star Home Energy Yardstick which can compare your household's energy use to others across the country and provides tips on improving your home energy efficiency based on your zip code and the types of fuel you use to heat and cool your home:

http://www.energystar.gov/index.cfm?fuseaction=HOME_ENERGY_YARDSTICK.showGetStarred

The Sierra Club Green Home website also offers information for homeowners contemplating home energy audits: <http://www.sierraclubgreenhome.com/go-green/home-performance-contractors/home-energy-auditors>

This is a project of the Air & Energy Committee of the Chicago Group of the Sierra Club. For more information and to volunteer for the committee please email Tony Fuller at arfarf13@sbcglobal.net or visit <http://illinois.sierraclub.org/chicago>.