

Don't forget the four areas of energy efficiency when buying a home

Buying a home is the largest and most important investment decision most people ever make. And one of the most influential factors in that decision today is the energy efficiency of the house.

Why? Because by not considering the energy efficiency of a home, a prospective homeowner could make a costly mistake. Mortgages offering a low interest rate are no bargain if oversized cooling and heating bills chew up the gains.

When looking at homes, the CertainTeed Home Institute recommends prospective home buyers examine four basic areas of energy-efficient construction before making a decision.

These are: 1) insulation, caulking and weatherstripping, 2) storm windows and doors or double or triple-pane windows, 3) an efficient cooling and heating system, and 4) efficient lighting and appliances.

Insulation, caulking, weatherstripping

Attic insulation is the most important thing to look for when evaluating the energy efficiency of a home. Check the attic (including the attic door). If it has 6" or less of fiber glass insulation, it should be upgraded to the recommended level of insulation for that geographic area.

After attics, sidewalls are the second most important area to check for insulation. Since you can't see inside to determine how much insulation exists, press

your hand on the wall. If it feels hot in the summer it may need more insulation. Properly insulated walls will not only help save energy, but

improve comfort in your home.

Next, check for adequate levels of insulation under floors and crawlspaces.

Finally, make sure all window and door facings, corner trim and siding joints and roof eave joints are caulked and weatherstripped to avoid air conditioning loss.

Windows/doors

Standard windows and doors can lose approximately five to eight times more energy than an insulated wall area of the same size. Therefore, it's important to check for storm windows and doors. They can help reduce energy loss by as much as 25 percent.

If the home doesn't have storm windows, look for double or triple-paned glass. It offers double and triple the thermal efficiency of a regular window.

Central heating and cooling systems

The efficiency of a central heating and cooling system will have a major impact on annual energy bills.

Check the efficiency rating on the furnace and boiler. It should have an AFUE (Annual Fuel Utilization Efficiency) of 80 percent or higher.

If you're looking at an older furnace, check to see if it runs smoothly or quietly. Look for oil stains and signs of wear. Ask how old it is. The average furnace can be expected to last about 25-30 years.

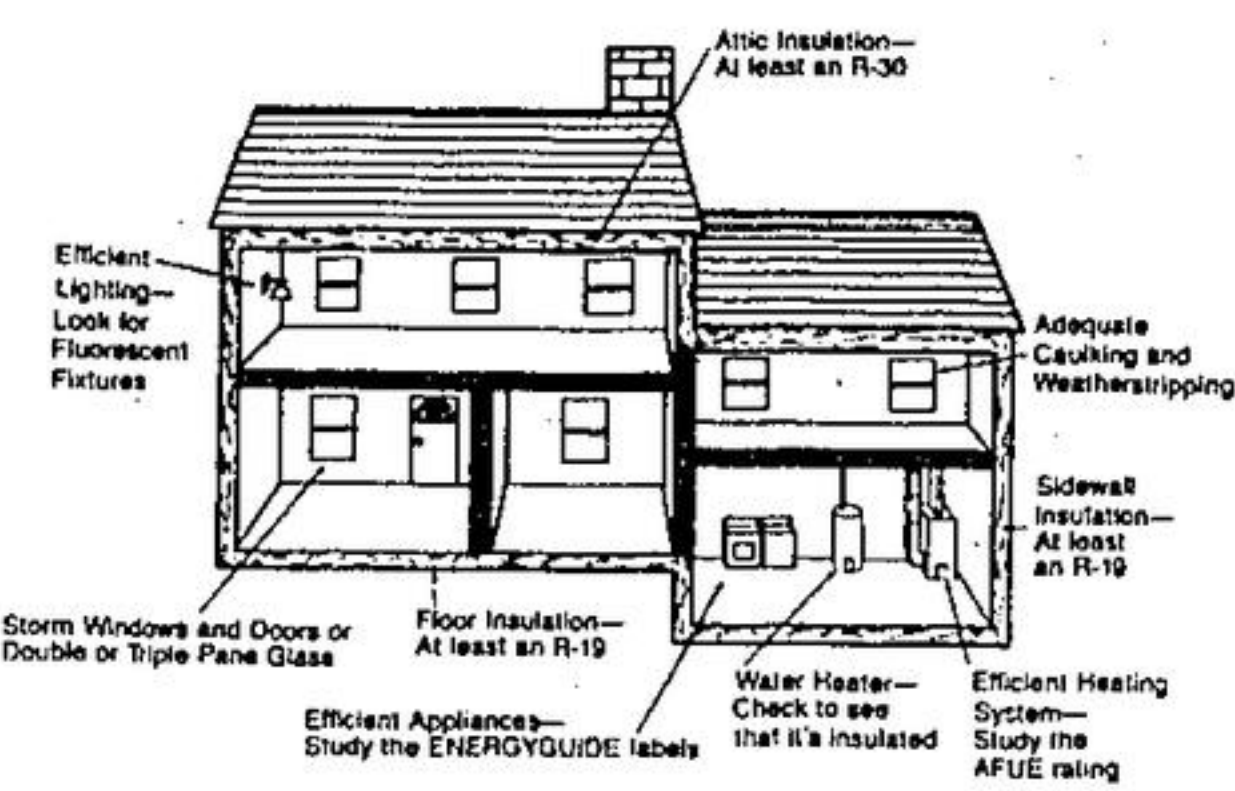
If the home has a heat pump, check its Heating Seasonal Performance Factor (HSPF) rating. A HSPF rating of more than 7 is excellent. A Seasonal Energy Efficiency Ratio (SEER) rating measures a heat pump's cooling efficiency. The higher the SEER, the more efficient it is at cooling. A SEER rating over 9 is excellent.

Lighting and appliances

The lighting and appliances in a home, to a lesser degree, also affect the amount of energy consumed, so look for efficient ones. A good way to evaluate efficiency of major appliances is to look for the bright yellow and black ENERGYGUIDE label to help you determine estimated annual operating costs. Look also for fluorescent fixtures.

For more tips on buying an energy-efficient home, write to the CertainTeed Home Institute, P.O. Box 860, Valley Forge, PA 19482, for a copy of the "Energy Checklist For Home Buying And Selling."

An Energy Efficient Home Has:



Summer swimming fun begins in the spring with sparkling, clear pool water

Spring means the return of warm weather and swimming in the backyard pool. As pool owners get their pools ready for another season of fun, what they find when they roll back the winter cover may not be what they want to see: Dull, stagnant, lifeless water.

Lack of use during the winter may mean leaves or other debris in the pool bottom. Dark mineral stains and streaks may show on pool sides and at the waterline. What may be worse yet is algae, not noticeable in its early stages, but just waiting to spread as the water gets warmer.

Beating the winter pool blues

But there is a solution to the winter-time pool blues, and BioGuard® has it. Smart pool owners begin by taking a sample of their pool water to their BioGuard Authorized Pool Dealer for a complete water analysis and personalized prescription for year-round care.

There the pool water is computer analyzed, free of charge. The personal BioGuard computerized water analysis system outlines a schedule of how much and which chemicals need to be added to get the water back into proper balance and ready for summer fun. BioGuard has formulated specific chemical products to solve pool problems and keep water sparkling clean and inviting all season.

Pool owners get helpful information on what to do to bring total alkalinity, pH and calcium hardness of the water into the proper range.

The computer analysis also performs many tests that home kits can't measure, like total dissolved solids, copper/iron content and stabilizer level, all important for the health and enjoyment of the pool.

Customized plan

Since every pool has different needs, BioGuard helps owners determine proper amounts of chlorine for bacterial control and algicides for algae control.

The customized plan also spells out the possible need for stain controllers, scale prevention agents or water clarifiers.

It all begins with that water sample. After the cover has been removed, fill the pool and circulate the water for at least 24 hours. Then, immerse a clean, closed plastic water sample bag (available from BioGuard Authorized dealers,

free of charge), about 18 inches below the surface of the pool, away from the returns.

Open the container and collect about a quart of water. BioGuard dealers test the

water and prescribe just the chemicals needed, no more.

The plan is easy to read and easy to follow. The result is safe, sparkling water to enjoy all summer long.



TO ANALYZE YOUR POOL WATER before swimming season begins, take a sample by immersing a clean, closed plastic container about 18 inches below the surface of your pool and away from the inlets. Take the sample to your BioGuard Authorized Dealer, who will analyze it while you wait.

A range of options: Creating dream kitchen step by step

Kitchens have always been the heart of the home. But with the advent of two career couples sharing the cooking and the popularity of informal entertaining, this room is getting even more attention.

Improving your kitchen one remodeling project at a time can often be the best, most economical way to make a difference. Even minor changes can make a vast improvement and be the first steps in the creation of your dream kitchen.

In smaller kitchens, a common objective in remodeling is to create more space. The average modern kitchen holds more equipment and appliances than

ever before, with everything from food processors to microwave ovens fast becoming standard items.

A number of options allow you to free more space in the kitchen without knocking down any walls. One possibility is to mount smaller appliances beneath cabinets to create more countertop space.

Another practical, space saving improvement is to install a new, multi-functional appliance. A hi/lo cooking center, a range with a second, smaller oven on top, offers maximum cooking capacity in a minimum of floor space.

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