

Better Buildings Neighborhood Program Backgrounder for Media

The Better Buildings Neighborhood Program is part of a national Better Buildings initiative led by the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) that promotes energy efficiency in America's homes, commercial buildings, and institutions. With seed funding provided by DOE, hundreds of Better Buildings neighborhoods across the country are helping homeowners, businesses, and institutions make significant energy efficiency improvements. Better Buildings is also supporting energy efficiency job expansion to help spur economic growth and pave the way for a clean energy future.

Homeowners and businesses don't realize how much money they throw away every year from wasted energy due to inefficient heating and cooling, unsealed openings, poor insulation, and other building inefficiencies. Homes and commercial buildings account for about 40 percent of our energy use in the United States and are responsible for nearly 40 percent of the country's greenhouse gas emissions. However, if just one out of every 10 homes and commercial buildings in the United States reduced their building's energy consumption by 25 percent, that could save \$8 billion per year and reduce our country's annual greenhouse gas emissions by an amount equal to removing 12 million cars from the road, or all the cars in the states of Washington, Oregon, Idaho, and Nevada combined.

Energy Savings at Home

Americans spend about 90 percent of their time indoors. The average American household spends nearly \$2,000 per year on home energy, but \$200 to \$400 of that could be going to waste due to drafts, air leaks around openings, and outdated heating and cooling systems. Energy efficiency improvements can result in increased comfort at home, better indoor air quality, and lower energy bills:

- Insulating walls and attics reduces heat loss, regulates temperature, and increases comfort.
- Sealing holes and cracks reduces drafts, dust, moisture, pollen, and noise. A well-sealed home improves air quality and reduces the indoor pollutants that can cause asthma.
- More efficient heating and cooling systems for your home make the indoor air less humid and prevent wasted time and resources waiting for hot water to reach the tap.
- ENERGY STAR® qualified compact fluorescent light bulbs use about 75 percent less energy and last 10 times longer than incandescent bulbs, saving consumers more than \$40 in electricity costs over the lifetime of each bulb.
- ENERGY STAR® qualified clothes and dishwashers save water as well as energy.

Getting a home energy evaluation helps identify the steps for saving energy and improving the comfort and value of a home. Better Buildings Neighborhood Program partners make it easy for homeowners to undertake home energy efficiency improvements by providing energy evaluations, access to qualified service providers, financing options, and, in some areas, incentives to complete upgrades.

Energy Savings at Work

Commercial buildings account for roughly 20 percent of all the energy used in the United States. Many businesses are paying for energy they don't need due to inefficient mechanical systems and building leaks. Better Buildings is helping businesses reduce operating costs by finding cost-effective energy solutions that improve commercial, institutional, and multifamily buildings.

Job Growth

Better Buildings supports job growth in the building contractor industry. Many communities lack qualified professionals to meet the growing demand for energy efficiency upgrades, but potential contractors may be hesitant to invest in proper training or certification without a sustainable demand for their services. Increased demand for building energy evaluations and energy efficiency services in Better Buildings neighborhoods will eventually create or support at least 30,000 jobs across the country. Investments leveraged by the program's seed funding will sustain these jobs in the future.

For more information about the Better Buildings Neighborhood Program, visit betterbuildings.energy.gov/neighborhoods.

