

WHAT
TO EXPECT
FROM



Home Performance with ENERGY STAR®

This guide is designed to explain the Home Performance with ENERGY STAR process from the initial visit to your home, to installation of energy efficiency work through to project completion. It will outline what you can expect from your contractor, your responsibilities as a customer, and how to get additional information.

How the program works:

The New York State Energy Research and Development Authority's (NYSERDA) Home Performance with ENERGY STAR program created a network of independent home improvement contractors that are accredited by the Building Performance Institute (BPI). BPI is a national resource for building science technology that sets standards for assessing and improving the energy performance of homes. **Each participating contractor has been trained to use state-of-the-art equipment to test your home and identify energy efficiency improvements.** The program assists contractors in becoming accredited and certified by BPI. NYSERDA, through its program implementer, Conservation Services Group (CSG), inspects a sample of jobs for quality, program compliance, consistency, and compliance with program eligibility rules, as well as BPI health and safety standards. The contractors who participate in the program warrant their own work. If needed, BPI is available for customer dispute resolution by calling 518-899-2727. **Neither NYSERDA nor CSG warrant the products and/or services of participating contractors.**





FINDING A BPI-CERTIFIED CONTRACTOR

To qualify for any incentives or financing through Home Performance with ENERGY STAR®, you **must** use a participating BPI-certified contractor. A list of participating contractors in your area is available upon request. A BPI-certified contractor has been trained to use the most advanced, state-of-the-art equipment to test your home and identify energy efficiency improvements.

TESTING YOUR HOME

Your contractor will arrange a time with you for the Comprehensive Home Assessment, which generally lasts two to three hours. The assessment will evaluate your heating and cooling equipment, insulation levels, and air infiltration. **The contractor will explain what improvements can be made, as well as the cost of making the improvements.** During the assessment, the contractor will test your home and complete visual inspections of the attic, basement, or crawl spaces. The contractor will charge a fee of up to \$250; you may want to get a price quote from the contractor prior to the visit. If you choose to have this contractor complete the energy efficiency improvements, the assessment fee will be deducted from the cost of the work. If you choose to have another participating contractor perform the work, you may have to pay for the new contractor to perform a second assessment.

The contractor will perform a number of tests on your home to determine what areas will benefit from energy efficiency upgrades. Specifically, the contractor will test your home for air leakage using a blower door and will look for opportunities to improve your home's insulation, heating and cooling system, windows, appliances, and lighting. The contractor then takes the information, enters it into Home Performance with ENERGY STAR software, and provides you with a Comprehensive Home Assessment report within two weeks.



FINANCING YOUR ENERGY IMPROVEMENTS

Home Performance with ENERGY STAR® has made it possible for participating contractors to provide you with reduced interest rate financing.

Assisted Home Performance with ENERGY STAR® Incentives for income-qualified homeowners are available through Assisted Home Performance with ENERGY STAR. If you expect to receive the Assisted Home Performance with ENERGY STAR incentive, you should be sure you qualify before you sign the contract. Energy Finance Solutions 1-800-361-5663 or the community-based organization that verifies your household income will notify you in writing if you qualify.

THE COMPREHENSIVE HOME ASSESSMENT REPORT

The report is about nine pages long, and a sample is available upon request. **The report will provide information on how your home uses energy** — the insulation level in your attic, walls, and basement; how leaky your home is; what kind of hot water system you have; and lighting and appliance energy use. This report will also **include a proposed work scope** — a list of work that your contractor has determined should be done to make your home more energy efficient, comfortable, safe, and durable. In many cases, this proposal will include several items. For example, replacing a furnace along with insulating and sealing the leaks in your attic. The proposal will include estimates of energy and money savings, as well as information on the payback period for recommended improvements. If you choose to have this contractor complete the energy efficiency improvements, the assessment fee will be deducted from the cost of the work.

This Comprehensive Home Assessment report is yours. **Use your Comprehensive Home Assessment to help decide what work to have done, taking into consideration your own needs and budget.** Remember, in the long run, a comprehensive plan for energy improvements, including insulation, sealing air leaks, and an efficient heating or cooling system, is usually the best approach to making your home energy efficient, comfortable, safe, and durable. A partial fix or using a contractor who is not accredited may cost you more in the long run. If you want to get another bid for the work proposed, make sure you get it from another participating contractor — it's the best way to be sure you know what you're buying and have access to a variety of financing options.



Installation of your energy efficiency improvements

At the time you sign your contract, you and your contractor should arrange a convenient time for work to begin and an estimate of the date it will be completed. It is strongly recommended that you, at a minimum, arrange to meet with the contractor at the beginning of each day, before work begins, and at the end of the day to review work progress and to ensure that all terms of the contract are being fulfilled. This will allow you to follow the work being done and to fully understand the impact the work will have on your home. For heating and cooling system installations and other systems that you need to operate, being involved when the system is installed will allow you to get tips on operation and maintenance of the equipment. Be aware that the work performed may disrupt the usual operations of your home; be sure to include cleanup of work areas in the contract.

THE CUSTOMER CONTRACT

When you decide on a contractor and the improvements you want, you will be presented with a written contract to review and sign.

Check this contract carefully:

- Make sure that all the work you want done is described, that everything you want to have installed is on the list, and that there is nothing that you do not want or do not understand in the contract.
- Include expected completion dates on the contract.
- In general, the price offered should be a fixed price, which cannot be changed without your notification and written permission (see “Change Orders”, on back). Be sure the contract clearly states whether it is a fixed-price contract or an estimate.
- The contract should cover terms of payment, such as a down payment or when the final payment becomes due.

More information about what consumers should know before signing a contract is contained in the Consumer Protections Board's guide “Home Improvements without Headaches.” When you are satisfied, sign the contract and the Home Performance Work Scope. Be sure your contractor gives you a copy; he/she will also send a copy to the program administrator. No work can begin until both documents are submitted.

CHANGE ORDERS

In many home improvement jobs the work scope may change during the course of the job. **This may occur because the customer decides to add or remove something from the work scope or the contractor discovers a problem or an opportunity for additional improvements during construction or installation.** For example, your insulation contractor may discover damage to the roof structure while insulating and air-sealing an attic, or the heating contractor may find a leak while replacing your boiler. Changes in the work scope must be written down in advance and signed by both the contractor and the homeowner — this is called a "Change Order." The contractor will give you a signed copy of the change order and provide the program implementer with a copy. The change order must include any impact that the added or omitted work will make, including cost-effectiveness or payback period of the project. Be sure you fully understand the impacts before you agree to the change. The program implementer requires that any change orders be signed and dated before a project can be considered complete — and before any financing or incentives are released.

FINAL TESTS

After the work has been completed, participating contractors are required to "test out," repeating the tests performed during the Comprehensive Home Assessment. It is very important that you arrange to have these final tests completed and you are present for the tests. **These tests ensure that the contracted work was performed properly and the home meets the program's health, safety, and technical requirements.** This means that no excess levels of carbon monoxide are present and that effective venting of combustion appliances and safe ventilation levels within the home are maintained. The results are included in the Certificate of Completion.

ACCEPTING THE JOB — THE CERTIFICATE OF COMPLETION

When all of the work in the original work scope and change orders is complete and the final tests are done, the contractor will prepare a Certificate of Completion for your review and signature. The Certificate of Completion is your signed statement to the contractor and to the program that the work for this project has been substantially completed. **DO NOT sign the Certificate of Completion until the work (original work scope and change orders) is substantially completed.** Note any remaining minor items in the "punch list" section of the completion certificate. Once you sign the Certificate of Completion, according to the terms of the contract with your contractor, your final payment becomes due. Incentives to you or your contractor will not be processed until after the Certificate of Completion is submitted. Participating contractors will provide the customer a written warranty on labor and materials for a minimum of one (1) year from the date the service is performed. Equipment installed will carry the manufacturer's warranty and any optional extended-warranty coverage that the customer selects. If a dispute between you and your contractor should happen and you are unable to resolve it with your contractor, contact BPI at 518-899-2727.

**Note that neither NYSERDA nor CSG warrant or guarantee the work of any BPI-certified Home Performance with ENERGY STAR contractors.*

For customer dispute resolution, contact BPI at 518-899-2727

For information about Assisted Home Performance with ENERGY STAR, contact EFS at 1-800-361-5663

**For all other questions about Home Performance with ENERGY STAR,
visit www.GetEnergySmart.org or call 1-877-NY-SMART**