

Professional audit reveals energy leaks

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Jeremy Scott from Energy Management Solutions sets up CFM meter and fan to test amount of air leakage. / Photo courtesy of Jason Scher

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Last week, I wrote about lessons I learned from attending the Save Energy Save Dollars session and my decision to do whatever else I could to reduce my energy usage. The first step was getting the energy audit. I had picked up an application from the session, but could not find it on my cluttered table. I did, however, find an ad in the Poughkeepsie Journal from Energy Management Solutions for a free audit sponsored by the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority, or NYSERDA.

I called and talked to Jason Scher, who offered to help me with the paperwork. A link to the NYSERDA site

(www.getenergysmart.org/SingleFamilyHomes/ExistingBuilding/Home

was emailed to me along with instructions on how to get my electricity usage reports from Central Hudson and my oil usage. I clicked it, downloaded a form, filled it out and mailed it back along with my oil and electricity bills for the past two years. In a few weeks I received an authorization code for a free audit. I was on my way.

The next step was filling out the pre-audit questionnaires about my appliance and electric inventory. I was given instructions to make sure my fireplace was clean, to ensure the house will not fill with ashes during the audit. All

the formalities completed, my audit was scheduled.

Finally the big day arrived. A crew showed up, led by Jeremy Scott. They asked me to make sure my fireplace was clean and doors and windows closed. They installed an air tight cover over my front door with a fan in the middle and a meter that measured CFMs (cubic feet per minute). Then the fan was turned on. All my air-conditioned air in the house was blown out. Ouch. The crew walked all through the house looking for areas where air was entering. The windows were fine, no leaks. I have 42 recessed lights that I was losing air through, the attic door and a few other areas.

I learned that if there are cobwebs, there is a leak. Small mosquitoes come through the spaces, and spiders know that. Armed with my newfound knowledge, I happily found a few more places with leaks. Electrical outlets and spaces under the sink where mice sneaked in. OK, I should have installed the covers over electrical outlets that Allison recommended.

The drafts and air leakage of my home was 4,552 CFM @50 pascals. Goal is 3,900 CFM @50 pascals. Scott collected all the data pertaining to the leaks and informed me that I will know the results and

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solutions to make my house more energy efficient in a few weeks.

Next week: The Results.

Lalita Malik is a member of the Dutchess County Environment Management Council.