

# Program can save money

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□ Air sealing and insulation help keep a residence warm in the winter and cool in the summer.

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In the winter, 40 mph blasts of icy air have a way of getting your attention, even if you are indoors. Laramie residents become keenly aware of how much money it costs to stay warm and just how energy-inefficient their homes are. With the balmy days of summer ahead, those inefficient homes will become equally unpleasant in hot weather.

The good news is that most housing in Laramie can be made more energy-efficient and comfortable. Even better news is that money is available to help at least some residents pay for those fixes.

Tiger Adolf, executive director of the Wyoming Energy Council said there are a few simple steps to take if you want to reduce your year-round energy consumption.

The first step in making a house or apartment more livable is to have an energy audit performed. The Energy Council trains and certifies local contractors in performing such audits and then doing the follow-up home improvements that are indicated.

When performing an energy audit, a contractor will show up with a "blower door," a "duct blaster" or even infrared cameras. These tools are used to find the places in your house where air (heating or air conditioning) is leaking in and out of the house.

What often ends up being true is that houses are leaking energy, which can be fixed by sealing the house better and by installing better insulation in attics, walls and under floors.

"The thing that will make the biggest difference, especially in old houses, is air seal-

ing and insulation," Adolf said. "After you fix that, you can look at things like improving the efficiency of the equipment and replacing furnaces or water heaters."

"Everyone wants to replace their windows first, but usually that is not a very good deal from a cost-effectiveness standpoint," she said. "Weather stripping and caulking around your windows will be better than replacing them, as a general rule. You can retrofit a window for \$3, as opposed to \$3,000 to replace it."

Much of the general population is unaware of just how much difference the energy efficiency measures can make.

"I don't think people are aware of how much money they can save with some very cost-effective measures," Adolf said. "For \$1,500 you can do insulation and air sealing and cut your cost by 30 percent annually in a drafty house."

She said the program could benefit a large portion of people residing in Wyoming, where winters are long and cold, and where summers can also be unpleasantly hot.

"The same conservation measures that help with winter heating bills will also reduce your summer cooling bill," she said. "Better insulation in your attic is going to keep you warmer in the winter and cooler in the summer."

Anyone who meets the low-income guidelines can receive weatherization assistance and energy audits, including those in mobile homes and those in rental houses or apartments. Those with income above the guidelines can still choose to pay for energy audits and efficiency improvements and then reap the benefits of lower utility bills.

The Wyoming Energy Council trains and certifies local contractors in the performing the audits and upgrades. Visit [www.wyominghomeperformance.com](http://www.wyominghomeperformance.com) for more information.

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