

Get Audited

Getting audited sounds like a scary prospect. But not all audits are cause for worry. In fact, when it comes to home energy efficiency, getting audited can lead to good things.

Major Savings

Undertaking a home energy audit is the best way to determine how much energy your home uses and identify places where you can improve efficiency. If you follow the recommendations that result from your audit, you can end up saving 20, 30, even 40 percent on your energy bills in the coming year.

Just remember, “An audit doesn’t save energy. But acting on the recommendations of the audit will save you energy. You have to actually do the work suggested in the audit to save,” stresses ENERGY STAR® spokesperson Maria Vargas.

Audit Options

Before you make changes around your home, you’ll need to figure out what kind of audit makes the most sense. There are three main types:

Do-it-yourself. In as little as five minutes, you can identify ways to improve your home’s efficiency with an online energy audit. “If you know a little bit about your home, you can get some rough estimates,” Vargas says. “It’s not customizable, but it’s a good first step in understanding your home.”

For an easy-to-use Internet-based audit, try the Home Energy Saver at www.hes.lbl.gov or the ENERGY STAR Home Energy Yardstick at www.energystar.gov. To complete the online audits, you will need to gather 12 months of utility bills (contact your local municipal utility for a 12-month summary if you do not have all of your bills on hand) as well as some basic

information about your home, such as zip code, age, square footage, and number of occupants.

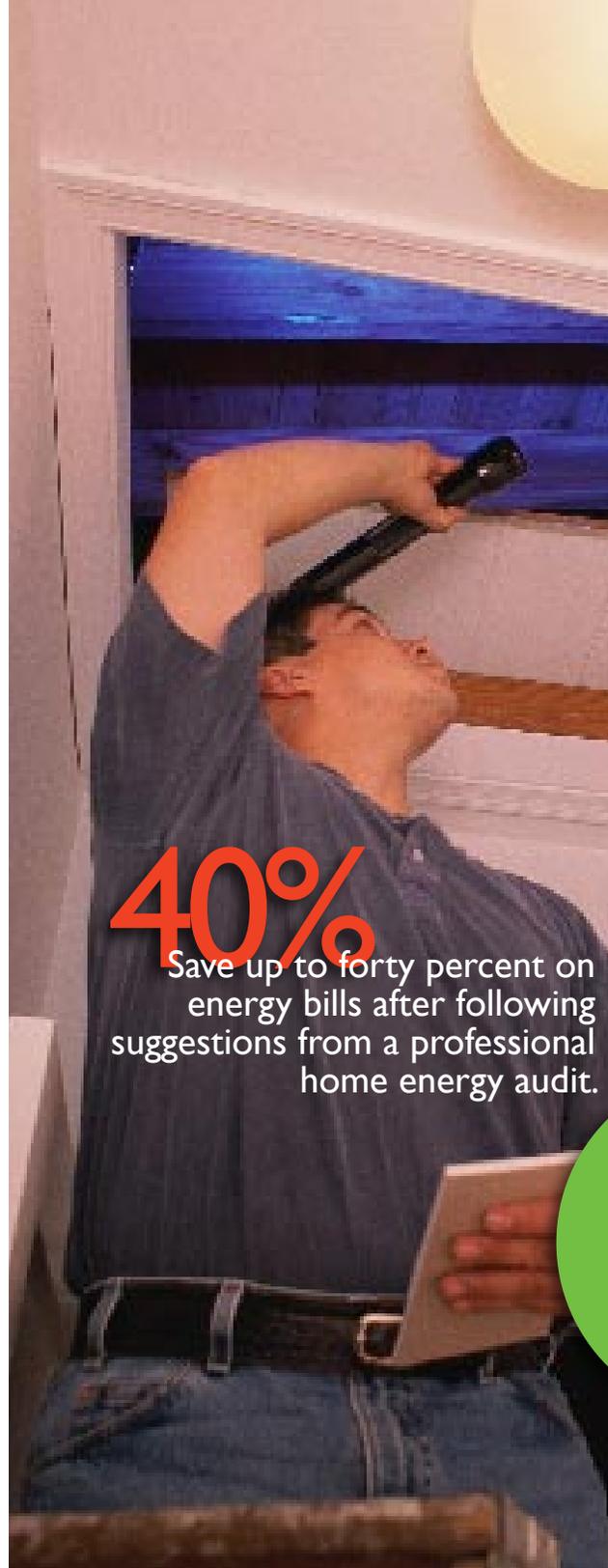
To conduct a more in-depth, physical audit of your home on your own, visit the U.S. Department of Energy website at www.eere.energy.gov. Search for “home energy audit” on the homepage to find a checklist of spots to pay attention to in each room.

Clipboard audit. Contact your local municipal utility to see if they offer free or discounted audits. Typically a utility employee will come out armed with basic tools such as a clipboard, tape measure, and flashlight and examine your home, looking for places where you can improve efficiency.

Whole-house audit. “There may not be one perfect solution,” Vargas admits. “But the whole-house audit is the best option if you are serious about upgrading the efficiency of your home.” This type of audit can take anywhere from a couple of hours to most of a day and should be done by a certified home energy auditor. Although whole-house audits may cost \$200 to \$300, the trained professional can suggest specific changes that can slash your energy bills considerably.

Although whole-house audits vary, most include room-by-room examinations of your home and an analysis of past utility bills. Many auditors use equipment such as blowers and infrared cameras to identify air leaks and other efficiency issues.

To find a certified home energy auditor, visit www.resnet.us.



40%
Save up to forty percent on energy bills after following suggestions from a professional home energy audit.

Now What?

Once your home energy audit is completed, the list of suggested changes may seem overwhelming. Even if you can’t make all of the efficiency upgrades this year, however, you can still enjoy the benefits of lower energy bills. ENERGY STAR® spokesperson Maria Vargas recommends prioritizing the recommendations and beginning with those moves that are easiest to implement. You might start by replacing burned-out bulbs with energy-efficient compact fluorescent light bulbs and installing a programmable thermostat. “You can do a bunch of these things at a fairly low cost and fairly easily,” Vargas says. As for the larger-scale recommendations? If you’re a handy do-it-yourselfer, you can tackle many projects on your own. Or consider hiring a contractor. Learn more about how to tackle energy efficiency upgrades involving insulation and air leaks on page 6.

try this today—

Check for tax

breaks. Some residential energy improvement projects are eligible for state or federal tax breaks. Find out if your projects qualify by contacting your local municipal utility and visiting www.energystar.gov.