

# Energy Audits, Why You Can't Do It Yourself

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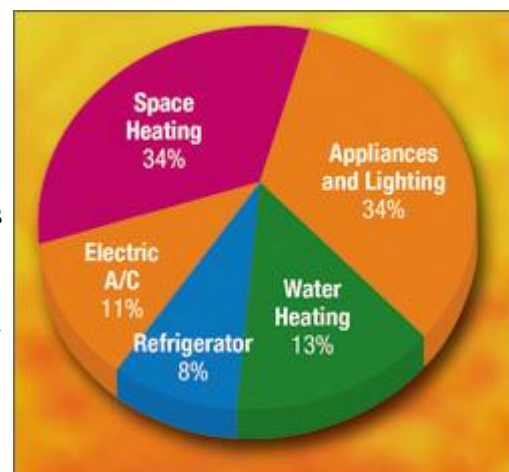
As utility cost rise everyone is looking for ways to save on their energy bills. The internet, the daily paper and magazines all have tips for reducing your energy usage and expenses. These little bits of energy saving insight are great advice, but are no substitute for a professional energy audit.

A full scale energy audit evaluates the entire home for inefficiency. The audit report provides valuable information on estimated costs to upgrade individual components and their expected payoff through energy savings realized. In addition the auditor uses specialized tools such as an infrared camera and or a blower door fan, which can locate unseen and unexpected areas of energy loss.

A homeowner simply making repairs based on tips or advice is likely missing the most cost effective upgrades available for their home. Without a plan doing it yourself is shotgun upgrading, in other words scattered without clear direction.

For example many homeowners opt to replace all the old windows in their home with new thermal double pane windows. Changing the windows may in fact not yield any appreciable energy savings. Nonetheless many people go for the windows first when energy upgrading.

With an energy audit plan it may be revealed that the most cost effective places to spend that window money is on insulation and setback thermostats. Making decision without the advice and expertise of an energy saving professional can merely leave you poorer with no or little energy savings to show for your expenditures.



Some upgrades can and should be done by the homeowner. The easiest of these is changing your old light bulbs to compact fluorescents. But don't expect to see dramatic savings in your electric bill. Lighting constitutes about 12 percent of the average families' electric usage. This equates as follows; for a \$150 a month electric bill, \$18 is for lighting. CFLs save about 50-75% over incandescent bulbs. Therefore the monthly savings is \$9-\$13 or \$108-\$156 yearly. Not a great deal of money, but certainly a worth while investment.

This brings up the point of energy investments. Most energy improvements are investments, they pay for themselves and then some over the life of the component. What is vitally important is to identify where and what are the best energy investments for your home and budget.

A home owner working together with a trained and experienced energy professional can establish the most valuable energy upgrades for their particular home. This would include those DIY projects from the plethora of tips and advice columns.

Since the idea of energy improvements is saving money, be sure to find and use an energy professional who will show you where and how to invest wisely.