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It Isn't the Windows

When you see a huge advertising campaign you need to think about how it's being paid for. Obviously sales pick up the tab for that. I am constantly bombarded with advertisements for replacement windows. I know contractors who install them and I've been told that there are many brands on the market and that most are junk. I know from the many homes that I have tested that windows are not the biggest problem with energy usage. In fact a study that was done several years ago (when prices were lower) showed that the payback on window replacement was over 100 years. That sounds drastic but most people don't realize what happens during a replacement window installation. If your home has double hung windows which is the most popular style all that is done during replacement job is that the sashes are removed and a new window is inserted in the opening. The only leakage that is corrected in a job like that is the leakage that took place around and between the sashes. During a blower door test I check every window with a smoke generator and the amount of leakage I find there is minimal. The majority of leakage with windows that make them lose energy occurs AROUND the frame where the original window was installed in the wall of the home and NOT inside of it. This area is not addressed during a replacement window job. A replacement window is a cosmetic thing. To stop the leakage that makes windows waste energy, the trim needs to be removed and foam sealant must be put in the gap. Then the trim can be reinstalled. That operation is huge and will save far more energy than a replacement window job. The cost is minimal because it doesn't require a window. Any trim carpenter can handle that job and the payback is going to be only a few years in energy savings.

Nobody is specifically looking for this kind of work so nobody advertises it. Whenever a customer tells me that they are having their windows replaced I act happy for them but inside I'm sad because I know they won't save much on their energy bills. I just don't want to be the negative Nancy to break it to them.

Before you commit to any large expense to save energy you should have some testing done on the house to identify where the real areas are that can save you the most. And don't fall for advertising campaigns that cost millions of dollars.

Ken Field is the owner of Slate Belt Energy and Field's Service, Inc. As a certified energy rater and contractor, he is qualified to assess every aspect of energy usage and prescribe solutions to save energy. He can be reached at 610-759-6306 or email Ken@FieldsService.com

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