

Portland Residential Roundtable March 12th

Guest speaker, Mike O'Brien

- Provided background on work in the city of Portland and new energy codes.
- New Oregon Energy Code: voluntary in April and mandatory in July
- Energy Star specs are 15% better than code in houses now and ETO will upgrade Energy Star specs to stay 15% ahead of code. To give people time to adapt, the changes won't happen until July 2009.
- Appliances must be Energy Star.
- High performance home will be 30% higher than code and will meet federal tax standard for \$2,000 credit.
- Builder option packages: as more builders participate, the prescriptive path options will grow as well.
- If something doesn't fit prescriptive packages talk to the program first and they might incorporate it into a new path.
- Renewable: solar projects should tie into federal credits as well (depending on availability).
- Question: Permits for solar more expensive : 2 year effort with pilot will help figure out better support
 - Working Group: with BDS to streamline permitting process in Portland and going through draft proposals
 - Fees expensive: issue is what to include in cost that is addressed in a building
 - Recommendation that city waive fees for residential installation of solar is being explored now.
- Local code amendment: stakeholder group formed for this discussion and will ask state to amend.
- Alternative Energy Review Panel is forming; more open, transparent process to look at something new and different in a positive framework and see how to get accepted by code. Promising signs from building department to adapt to change.
- Home Performance: House to meet federal tax credit so wouldn't have to go through home energy rating if following prescriptive path:
 - low energy home where solar can contribute
 - must build efficient house and put on solar to meet certain requirements
 - calls out U-value with R-49 across entire ceiling
 - wants to build 30 houses, ideally triplets with same builder and crew and offer incentives to track cost by energy measure

Home Energy Solutions Update

- Renewing all trade allies in Existing Homes.
- Program training added on March 28th.
- Incentives will not change for 2008.

- Electronic incentive applications being tested online with auto fill boxes. Should cut down on applications with missing information.
- Home Performance training May 12-16; see Noelle to sign up.
- Cooperative marketing funding \$2,000 per quarter- great benefit for trade allies.

Energy Star New Homes Update

- In 2009 state energy code changes will affect program.
- In 2008 the program stays the same.
- Starting in July 2008, trade allies can build to 2009 code and receive 2009 incentives.
- House as system training is a good opportunity for trade allies.

Solar and Renewables Update

- Small Wind: new program run by Erin Johnston at Energy Trust.
 - Incentives for small turbines outside Portland Metro area; PGE or Pacific Power customers.
 - Erin is enrolling trade allies (we have 10 right now) focus is on educating trade allies.
- Good time to get involved in solar energy right now.
- Residential solar: collaboration and education with everyone coming together to talk about value of industry and why to becoming involved.
- Market research with focus groups in 2007 explored ways to motivate the market.
- Portland: Solar Makes Sense Workshops - introduction to solar energy for customers. Go to Solar Oregon website for registration info. 1 hour presentation goes through incentives, forms, and steps to get installation done. Then connects them with a trade ally list. Trade allies are welcome to attend and connect with customers.
- Solar Energy Review: mini site-assessment as an add-on to home energy reviews. Will determine if a site is good for solar energy, and provide list of solar trade allies for the customer.
- New Homes: Need to understand what is going on with builder to make a house solar ready. Tax incentives are available that go directly to builder.
- New home construction: for 2008, builders of new homes who add solar can receive up to \$10,000 from ETO, and tax state tax credit capped at \$6,000. The federal tax credit, capped at \$2,000, can only be claimed by occupant/buyer of home.
- Home buyers like the federal tax credit, and it helps builders market to customers.
- Retrofit solar incentives and tax credits are designed to go to home owner because they are making an investment up front.
- Northwest Solar Expo: April 16-19th includes 3 days of classes.

Added Topics

- Paul from Home Visions West:

- Wants to grow his business and is concerned that trainings used to be free but now they cost money.
 - Trainings don't include handouts and things to bring back. He would like handouts and wants to make training better.
 - Also stated that certain programs have different guidelines.
- Diane responded: We only charge for the cost of the training, no profit is made on trainings we offer.
- Training Calendar: the session descriptions are not good enough to decide to attend - would like PDFs with in-depth descriptions.
- Slide shows with handouts would make training better - not just presentation.
- Tom: our training calendar has been up for about 1 year but it has recently been revamped, and will be a shared effort with other organizations. People from each org will have a login to add events, making the calendar a one-stop shop.
- Dave (Home Performance Manager): efforts to save paper and not print materials for training because they were being wasted before. In the future will give more handouts and post most presentations online. We can also send them out.
 - There is a training coordination effort in Oregon to fill everyone's needs. The regional training calendar is an example of the effort.
 - Home Performance account manager offer training for Home Performance and will come out to do field visits for free, or help with new equipment. Home Performance account managers are there to support the market and contractors.
- Program staff are also willing to come out to go over how to fill out paperwork correctly.
- Jeremy (WISE) Questions: Can we consider paying incentives to contractors instead of customers? How are we doing on new financing options?
 - We don't pay contractors because it creates a new level of administrative work, which adds overhead costs to providing incentives.
 - For consumers it would not look right on invoice and not worth the hassle
 - We want to give decision to customer on incentive
 - Update on financing: letters have gone out to banks soliciting interested and getting feedback on rates. More to come in April and more conversations needed. We are actively working to provide better financing than the current financing with EFS.
- Suggestions were made to look at:
 - Buy down rate more than incentive for the customer.
 - Look into American General Local branch.
- Solar is an exception because incentives are paid to the contractor, risk liability for Energy Trust. The Solar program physically inspects every measure that receives an incentive, and only pays the contractor after inspection. We make the contractors meet requirements before being paid.
 - Upfront cost is a deterrent to customer, so we work more closely with contractors.
 - Solar trade allies are the only ones that can offer an incentive, so the enrollment process is more complex.

- Jeremy: when is the Multifamily window incentive promotion happening?
 - Diane said it is in draft right now. The dates will be April 15th- June 30th, details to come for all Existing Homes TAs.
- Jeremy: when are clarifications to specs and modifications expected?
 - Getting through all trade ally meetings with feedback
 - The weatherization specs are online with clarifications online
 - Timeline: Dave- living document with feedback, up by mid April after all trainings
- Jeremy: when is it good to recommend home performance vs. a home energy review to customers?
 - Dave: working on document to outline that, but bulk of houses would benefit from home performance.
 - We leave decision to consumer.
- Jeremy: How are we handling four-plex air-sealing?
 - Dave: We are looking at specs and to adjust incentives.
- Jeremy: Ongoing question, when is a call-back to make minor corrections worth it? Wants feedback.
- Jeremy: What do the various trade ally awards mean how were the selection criteria generated?
 - Diane: the awards looked at data, QC record, customer service factors. The awards were intended to be a fun way to recognize the efforts of our trade allies.
- Jerry: when should we go back for a QC correction? It costs \$450 (average cost for call back with administrative work).
 - Jack Hruska: QC during the month of February had a 30% failure rate; many projects didn't pass and contractors were called back about major issues which should have been done in the first place. The work should have been looked at before leaving, and the trade allies should be going back, or doing the work in the first place. As inspectors, we do recognize additional expenses for going out to correct problems.
- Diane Announcements:
 - ACI conference in Pittsburgh www.affordablecomfort.org: great conference.
 - Blazer promotion: coming out in mail due by April 11th.
 - Better Living Show coming up.