WEATHERIZATION INDUSTRIES SAVE ENERGY

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COMMENTS ENERGY PERFORMANCE SCORING FOR EXISTING HOMES

Although the discussion thus far about the use of EPS for existing homes—including site versus source energy, the accuracy of the models, how to calculate carbon, and what graphic format to present to the homeowner—has been important, much more fundamental questions have been all but ignored. The basic questions of what the goal of an EPS in existing homes is, and how the tool would be used, must be addressed before the finer details discussed so far can have meaning. It seems clear that if the goal of the EPS is to encourage homeowners to install energy efficiency measures in existing homes, no matter the answers to the questions above, the current tool is not adapted for the job.

If the goal of an EPS is to encourage retrofits of existing homes, the primary problem with the current tool is that it fails to focus on the benefits of these retrofits. As the MetaResource report states: "Numerical improvements in a home's energy performance score from efficiency upgrades are generally small relative to the overall score."[1] Clearly, a message that a significant investment in efficiency will only yield a marginal improvement in a home's energy use is contrary to the Existing Homes Program's overall messaging and goals.

The research bears out the conclusion that the EPS does not motivate homeowners to install efficiency measures. As the MetaResource report puts it: "The new CHER and the two different home energy scores (HES and EPS) do not appear to be driving differences in follow through rates."[2] Again, if an EPS in existing homes does not motivate homeowners to invest in energy efficiency, what is its purpose?

The analogy to a MPG rating is frequently given as the goal of what an EPS should strive for, but the question of if this should truly be the goal of an EPS has not, at least with industry, been discussed in any depth. With cars the goal of an MPG to motivate people to buy smaller, newer cars; an EPS modeled on MPG would likely have the same effect with homes. The problem is that for cars, we scrap gas guzzlers, we don't retrofit them. The Trust Existing Homes Program is the in business of promoting retrofits of existing homes and it is clear that the current EPS does not promote this goal. Therefore, if the goal of an EPS is to encourage homebuyers to purchase smaller, newer homes, the tool is on the right track to be promoted at time of sale. However, if the goal is to motivate homeowners to make cost effective energy improvements to their existing homes, the current versions of the tool do not appear to be appropriate for the job.

For more information please contact Jeremy Anderson at (503) 569-1381.

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[1] Home Performance Scores: Efforts to Date with Modeling Tool Comparison and Summary of Key Issues; Discussion of Key Issues #2.

[2] Analysis of Pilot Group Internet Survey Results and Energy Trust Fast Track Data; Key Takeaways bullet point #1.