

MAYOR MARVIN'S COLUMN

In an effort to continue our energy saving initiatives and environmental stewardship, I want to alert you to a very useful service offered by the State of New York through (NYSERDA), the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority. NYSERDA's purpose is to help New York meet its energy goals of reducing energy consumption, promoting the use of renewable energy sources and protecting the environment. Residents of the River House have availed themselves of this service and reaped energy savings in many areas. In a subsequent column, I will highlight the experience of River House as a successful case study.

Both multi-unit and single family home dwellers can participate in NYSERDA's Home Performance with Energy Star Program. The program assembled a network of independent home improvement contractors throughout the State accredited by the Building Performance Institute (BPI) and qualified to do residential energy evaluations. The BPI is a national resource for structural science technology that sets standards for assessing and improving the energy performance as well as the health and safety of homes.

Under the auspices of NYSERDA, a BPI certified contractor will perform a Comprehensive House Assessment, lasting approximately three hours, which will identify areas where energy efficiency and safety improvements can/should be made. The contractor will perform a number of tests using special diagnostic equipment to measure such things as the location and amount of air leaking from a home. Most importantly, he will run tests to determine whether the major combustible appliances (furnace, boiler, stove) are operating safely.

The contractor may or may not charge a fee and the amount varies by region so ask for a price quote up front and whether the cost can be deducted from future repairs.

At the end of the process, a homeowner will receive a proposal detailing the suggested improvements and associated costs. You may be eligible for incentives or low interest financing to make energy efficiency improvements more affordable. Residents of River House availed themselves quite successfully of a discounted loan.

Some of the most frequently suggested improvements include:

- Replacing old appliances with Energy Star ones. To receive this label of Energy Star, a product must meet or exceed energy efficiency and quality guidelines determined by the U.S. Department of Energy. As an example, an Energy Star air conditioner uses 25% less energy than a standard new model and up to 40% less than a model that is more than 10 years old. Energy Star cordless phones use only one-third of the energy consumed by standard cordless phones and LCD model flat screen TVs use less than 50% of the power consumed by a plasma model.
- Installing programmable thermostats to allow you to keep the house warmer when unoccupied but automatically cool upon scheduled arrival home. Homeowners save 3% on energy costs for each degree that the air conditioner thermostat is above 72 degrees. Also, window mounted air conditioners should be the proper

size for the square footage to be cooled, installed in a central window rather than a corner one to allow for better air movement, and sealed with caulking to prevent cool air from escaping. A unit placed in the shady side of a room uses almost 10% less electricity than one placed in the sun.

- Adding insulation to a home, especially in the attic.
- Using multiple panes of glass on windows to insulate against weather, sound and impacts.
- Converting to digital thermostats on heating and cooling systems to control temperatures more accurately.
- Changing all light fixtures to accommodate CFL bulbs which use 75% less electricity and last 10 times longer than conventional light bulbs.
- Increasing the space between refrigerators and surrounding walls and cabinets to allow for increased air circulation around coils. A refrigerator should be kept as far away as possible from the stove. If adjacent, the refrigerator will work twice as hard to produce the same cooling results.

NYSERDA has a very informative and comprehensive website at www.nyserda.org or they can be reached by calling 1-866NYSERDA.

On a related topic, the new Federal regulations promulgated by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) relating to the removal of lead paint on any building built prior to 1978 will now take effect until October 1, 2010. The regulation requires that a contractor must be certified in the handling of lead paint for any renovation and that additional safeguards and procedures be mandated when removing paint to eliminate the deleterious airborne particles. On some projects, this may require the “tenting” of the building.

Originally set to take effect in April, the regulations were delayed to allow contractors to receive the required training to be properly certified. The penalties for not using a certified contractor are quite punitive at thousands of dollars per day. As always in any home improvement/repair, be mindful of the inconvenience to your neighbors and notify them accordingly.