



Comfort vs. Efficiency

What comes first, comfort or energy efficiency?

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A friend of mine recently told me that his heat pump business has slowed dramatically. It's no wonder, with oil at \$1.77 a gallon there is no urgency for homeowners to cut their heating bills. Many of us, however, still suffer from uncomfortable or unhealthy homes. One of the many things I have learned over the years of visiting homeowners is to listen to their concerns about their home. The concern is rarely about the heating bill but more about being uncomfortable in areas of the home. A cold room, a cold floor, a draft, noise, ice buildup, or bad smells are just some of the more common complaints. And sometimes I hear them explain they have had some work done but the problem persists.

That's because not all insulation companies are created equal. I equate it to going to the doctor. Many of us can relate to that. We find we have high cholesterol or one of the many other common issues, and the doctor prescribes a daily pill. Sound familiar? While other professionals out there will look at your overall lifestyle and recommend some changes and alternatives that may solve the issue you went in for, and also improve your overall health and well-being.

For example, you have a very cold kitchen floor and you're uncomfortable standing at the stove and sink. That's a very

common complaint. If you call a heating contractor, they probably will recommend more heat or upgrading your heating system. If you call a building contractor, they may want to sell you windows and doors. Call an insulation company, and they may advise you need to insulate your attic. In the end, you may still end up with a cold floor. A good home performance professional will do many tests for you and then recommend various solutions so that you can choose what fits your budget.

energy efficient, they have created some comfort issues for me. As with any blown air heat source we now have a nice and warm living room but my wife's sewing room and my office are very cold. At least 10 degrees colder. I need to run an electric heater if I want to sit in my office and work. Kind of defeats the energy efficiency first thing, doesn't it?

We use our five senses to know if we are comfortable in our homes. When you focus on comfort the light comes on in

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A recent Rocky Mountain Institute report stated that 70 percent of homeowners who had some energy improvements done on their home cited comfort as the reason for the upgrade. Consumers are telling the industry they want comfort, and contractors are responding with energy efficiency as if the two were synonymous. They are not. For example, heat pumps have exploded on to the market, and for good reason. They are very efficient. And I like heat pumps – I have three in my home. But while being

a eureka moment and people get Twitter crazy! Research Institutes all around the world are advocating the benefits of home comfort on wellness, learning, productivity and health. These items resonate with the general public. So when looking for advice on your home's comfort issues look for a Building Performance Institute certified Home Performance company, one that will listen to your concerns and offer specific solutions to address those concerns. When you promote comfort in your home, energy efficiency will follow.