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# HOUSE WISE

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*Busy at S'more  
preparation.*

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## Do You Need an Audit?

*By Elizabeth Guinn*

April and May have been big months for us. Dan was back at the books again. In the past month we travelled to Boone, NC so that Dan could attend a BPI certification class and had fun camping while we were there. BPI stands for Building Performance Institute and he passed the exam with flying colors. What does this new certification do for us? This additional class allows Dan to take the Home Energy Auditing another step further. Dan learned a great deal about combustion appliance safety. It's a great thing to seal your house up as long as you have a certified auditor like Dan with the proper equipment to verify that the fresh air ventilation is sufficient to prevent a carbon monoxide problem inside your house, something your average weatherization guy is not going to be able to do for you.

As we progress in our understanding of how to make your house more energy efficient we have been learning that there are

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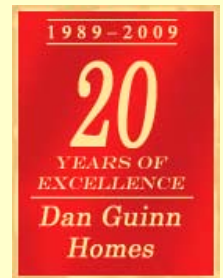
## Dan's Desk

*By Dan Guinn*

I know you are all waiting with baited breath for my Father's day present picks. I get more emails and comments about my tool suggestions than about anything else I write about. At least I know you are reading and interested.

I struggle each year making my tool suggestions because I have to stay away from particular hobbies like golf or fishing and try to come up with some more mainstreamed selections. I must admit that all of my suggestions are meant for a Dad who is somewhat handy and has a basic love

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many precautions that need to be considered. So we decided to go through a set of questions that may help you decide if an energy audit is right for you.

First question up is why are you interested in an Energy Audit it the first place? Sounds simple but it is important to understand what an energy audit can do for you. If you are seeing high energy bills this is a good indication that an audit will benefit you. What would high be? An average monthly bill over \$200 may indicate a problem. There are many factors involved so this is a very broad brush approach. All houses can be improved but the ones with the most energy use will receive the most benefit from an audit. |

Secondly you need to consider comfort issues. Is one part of your house colder in the winter or hotter in the summer? This is a sure sign that there is a problem that needs to be addressed. An energy audit can identify the source of the problem and help with recommendations to resolve the issues. It may also indicate that there are significant savings that can be obtained from resolving these issues. Most comfort issues in our homes can be identified and solutions obtained through an energy audit and careful inspection.

What is your energy saving goals? This is important to identify at the beginning because an energy audit can quantify the amount of estimated savings you can achieve. This is why testing before and after improvements are necessary. The improvements you want to make may or may not be what you are expecting to achieve on a yearly basis. Dan would be able to make recommendations and cost estimates, based on the test information, what direction you should take to get results.

How many occupants do you have staying in your house? With our changing economy many families are combining to make ends meet. This may not seem to have a huge effect an energy audit but the amount of people in a house does affect many of our indoor air quality issues that we may be experiencing. Have you ever been in a crowded room in the summertime? This is an easy way for us to understand how the amount of people in a home affects performance.

What type of heating/ cooling system do you have? This question may turn out to be the most important. As I mentioned above, safety is a concern when we tighten up our houses because it may create unsafe conditions. Dangerous carbon monoxide and toxic combustion gases can be drawn into your house. With many of us struggling just to get by, much of the energy savings projects are being done by homeowners. There is nothing wrong with doing your own work, just have a comprehensive testing of your house when you are done to insure your family's safety. This testing should not be dismissed as not being necessary as CO is odorless and deadly. Any properly trained auditor will test your systems to make sure no unsafe conditions exist before and after your improvements have been made. This is the single most important reason for having an audit done before and after energy improvements.

Remember, all houses are green houses; you just need the right person to show you how to make it happen.



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for tools of all kinds like I do.

I am going to start the list off right with a trip to Sam's Club. My first selection is the 48" Members Mark grill with the built in refrigerator. This grill has a grilling area off to the side for doing smaller items like shish kabobs or maybe hot dogs. The central part of the grill with the domed lid is large enough to rotisserie not one, not two, but 4 whole chickens at one time while still able to cook steaks on the grill surface. The two counter areas on either side are nice prep areas as well. One of the nicest features though, is the fridge in the bottom for keeping drinks chillin while the meat is cookin. From an Energy consultant point of view I have huge issues with a heat source next to a cooling source but for weekend grilling events, I'm going to let this one slide. Visit Sam's to find this grill for only \$898.

Looking for something not so pricey and a little easier to carry in your Prius? How about the Ratchet-Allen Key. Everyone needs Allen wrenches for everything from tightening your rear view mirror to fixing your kid's bike and there is nothing better than something that takes something you do a lot and makes it simpler. The main issue that I have with individual allen wrenches is that they have to be inserted over and over again until the screw is tight. Not any more! The Ratchet-Allen Key comes in either English or Metric sizes and has a built in ratcheting handle. So you simply insert the head once and ratchet handle does the work for you. They are great individually for \$16.95 or get both for \$26.95 at <http://www.garrettwade.com/hex-ratchet-imp/p/76B03ddd01/>.

My third choice is for those guys who like to work in the yard, or whose wives would like them to work in the yard, it works either way. I love the Leatherman Hybrid Gardening Pruners. This is similar to the standard Leatherman tool that we are all familiar with, just amped up a notch. The cool yellow and black color scheme just adds to the tools appeal (it reminds me of a DeWalt). The pruning shears are the base of the tool instead of the pliers for their standard Leatherman. Inside the two handles are hidden a weeding tool a saw, screwdriver and several other tools. And, of course, it comes with the handy sheath to clip it to your belt because you never know when you are going to be overpowered by the urge to trim bushes. It goes for \$59.85 at <http://www.leathermanstore.com/leatherman3.html>.

Have your own tool ideas? Have a specific wish that you want me to put before your wife in my newsletter cleverly disguised as my tool idea? Send them to me, I will try to get some of them out before Father's day in next month's issue.



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Psalms 127:1a