

DOE Challenge Home Program

A Note From Sam Rashkin: Goodbye Challenge, Hello Zero

The DOE Challenge Home is changing its name to DOE Zero Energy Ready Home. This is a big deal! We are taking on the exhaustive process of rebranding after working so hard to establish awareness of this cutting edge new program; after developing an impressive internal infrastructure (e.g., logos, brochures, website, and extensive program documentation); and after integrating the name in external initiatives (e.g., green MLS's, regional incentive programs, proposed tax credit language, appraisal training, etc.). Which begs the question, why change? Some recent history is in order to answer that question. This winter, presidents and senior staff from ten leading companies, representing over 50 percent of the 8,000 homes committed to Challenge Home certification, were gathered for a day-and-a-half roundtable meeting to learn from each other and to discuss opportunities for moving forward. DOE heard one unanimous request loud and clear; 'Zero Energy Ready' is a much more effective name to engage consumers than 'Challenge Home'. Collectively they said, "Please change the name!"

These partners are right and we have to change the name regardless of how painful the transition process is. DOE Zero Energy Ready Home cannot be a successful program if we don't listen to our partners and continuously improve. And so, the process begins. Please pardon the upheaval and please be patient. Changes this significant cannot happen overnight and without bumps-and-bruises along the way. However, before you know it, September 2014 will roll around and the process will be complete. Most importantly, the outcome remains the same -- all of our DOE Zero Energy Ready Home partners will be providing great homes for American homebuyers.

Updated specification released

In response to a steady stream of thoughtful feedback from our partners, DOE is releasing [REV04 of the National Program Requirements](#). One of the most noticeable changes is the name change to DOE Zero Energy Ready Home, along with the new logo.

Other key changes include:

- full compliance with the Indoor airPLUS program (eliminating a lone exception on garage exhaust ventilation which wasn't needed following EPA's latest update of this spec in November 2013);
- adding eligibility for some multifamily buildings four or five stories above grade (consistent with the ENERGY STAR Homes program); and
- adding a dry climate design option for buried ducts, to satisfy the ducts-in-conditioned-space requirement.

Please note that these specs go into effect for homes *permitted June 21, 2014 or later* but can also be utilized sooner if a builder/rater desires. We encourage you to [download](#) and review the requirements and [contact us](#) with any questions.

Hot water distribution spec is encouraged for now

One of the benefits for builders participating in the DOE Zero Energy Ready Home program is addressing key technical challenges to optimize both efficiency and performance. One such challenge many of our partners face is the redesign of the hot water distribution system within the home to increase its efficiency and performance. In recognition of the time involved for this redesign for numerous partners, DOE has extended the period during which the hot water distribution spec is not yet mandatory - until *August 1, 2014*. Homes permitted before this date are strongly encouraged to meet the hot water distribution spec, but are not yet required to do so to qualify. Learn more about hot water distribution systems from this recent [webinar](#).

Applications for Housing Innovation Awards available

The 2014 [Housing Innovation Awards](#) for the DOE Zero Energy Ready Home program will feature builders in custom, production and affordable categories who are leading a major housing industry transformation to zero energy ready homes.

Any [registered builder](#) who has certified a DOE Challenge Home or DOE Zero Energy Ready Home between April 1, 2013 and June 30, 2014 is eligible to compete. Applications are due June 30, 2014. Please [contact us](#) if you need assistance.

The 2014 Housing Innovation Awards ceremony will be held on September 23, 2014, at [EEBA's Excellence in Building Conference](#) in St. Louis, MO.

From the comfort of your desk

Don't miss [Building Energy Optimization Tool \(BEopt\) Training](#) on **Thursday, May 15, 2014**. This webinar is part of the Tech Training Series where experts go into detail on systems and tools that help to ensure the energy efficiency, comfort, quality and long-term durability of DOE Zero Energy Ready Homes. Scott Horowitz and Craig Christenson with the National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) will introduce you to BEopt, a free software tool developed under the Building America program, that helps design and sell cost-effective homes. This powerful but easy-to-use tool improves home designs by finding the best efficiency measures for your climate and budget.

Information on upcoming sessions is available on the [events](#) page.

Up close and personal

Sam Rashkin and other talented trainers continue to tour the country delivering the Zero Energy Ready Home training. The training highlights the business case for building high performance homes as well as the technical details to construct these high-value homes. Here are some upcoming training locations:

[April 30, 2014, Pompano Beach, FL](#)

[May 8, 2014, West Chester, PA](#)

[May 19, 2014, Madison, WI](#)

You deserve credit

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