

FAQ

We are not allowed to enter a house, but thank you.

If you're a tenant, you can still participate in the program, we just need to get your landlord's permission for you to participate in the program.

Key Themes

- **Suzanne makes it easy**
- **Rebates make it affordable**

How do you know our contractors are trustworthy?

- We work in partnership with state agencies and Pepco and they have a list of qualified contractors who have been reviewed and are eligible to do this work. Those contractors are certified, licensed and insured. STEP has picked from that pool 5 "preferred" contractors. We ask all participants to review the contractors they work with so we can provide their average ratings to other program participants.
- Here is the preferred contractor list to look at.

Who hired Suzanne?

- Suzanne works for the STEP program and is paid for by the DOE grant. She does not work for the utility and does not work for DOE..

Where do the rebates come from?

- [Pull out the demonstration rebate sheet.] STEP pays you up to \$400 so long as you are out of pocket at least that amount and complete the steps within the time frames. [Say rebates of up to \$3900 are available from PEPCO and DHCD.]

What kind of repairs are common place?

- Insulation and air sealing. This means sealing up all the cracks in the house where you are losing conditioned air. People choose to replace furnaces etc but not too often.

What is the evaluation like, have you seen one?

How do I find the energy evaluator? How do I know they are competent?

- Suzanne Parmet
- Pepco, MD Energy Administration and the Maryland Dpt of Housing and Community Development all have a list of highly qualified contractors to do this sort of work. Those contractors are certified, licensed and insured,. In addition, STEP has picked from this list five contractors that have demonstrated the ability to provide good quality services, and we review

their work on a continual basis. Here's a list of the preferred contractors if you would like to have a look.

How does the rebate work for the audit?

- Hiring a home energy evaluator typically costs \$400. (In limited circumstances, the fee may be higher.) Right now there are incentives available through the utilities and state agencies that cover \$300 of that cost. If there is any fee over the \$400, STEP pays that amount. So, you only pay \$100.

Where are they going to look in my house?

- They will look pretty much everywhere in your house. In particular, they will be concerned with your attic, basement, the crawlspace (if any). They will look at appliances, windows and doors, exterior walls. And they will test fuel systems. Some people are concerned that their house is too messy, but don't worry they have seen it all. Here is a case study for you to look at.

Is this the same program that is running in UP?

- It was piloted in UP, but we have a program that is specific to your community.

How long does the process normally take?

- From sign up through completion of improvements can be done as quickly as 1 month, but most people complete it all within 3 – 6 months. If you complete each of the steps shown in the Participation Agreement within the time frames indicated, you'll be eligible for the highest level of incentives.

What if I have problems after everything?

- STEP has an independent technical consultant that is available to perform Quality Assurance reviews. Get in touch with Suzanne and we will make sure they come out to your home.

Do I have to stick a sign in my yard? They are ugly.

- You are under no obligation to do so. If at any time you don't want something, you call Suzanne.

Who will have access to our information? Will the government?

- All of your data is completely private and confidential; we will need to look at your utility data to calculate any changes from before the audit and after completing the work. We will share the aggregate numbers with the government, but none of it is tied to your name.

Who is funding this program? Where is this money coming from?

- A grant from the Department of Energy (through the Better Buildings Neighborhood Program).

Who can participate?

- STEP is only available in College Heights Estates, Hyattsville, Riverdale Park and University Park. You must live in a single-family home, townhouse or a building with no more than 4 units. Renters can participate so long as they get the permission of their landlord.

If I can't afford the \$100

- There are other programs available for families meeting certain income guidelines. If you would like, here is some information. DHCD LIEEP and DHCD/County WAP.

Who else is doing this?

- There are four communities doing this the next year. Last year it was piloted in UP. There are over 200 households participating in the program currently. Hyattsville, University Park, College Heights Estates and Riverdale Park.

Why do others do this?

- Number one reason for the hundreds of people in the program now is to reduce their utility bills. Everyone feels they are paying too much. Another big reason is home comfort. For example if you have a big temperature difference between rooms or floors, the energy efficiency improvements should help to even that out, making your whole space more comfortable. Home values are another reason, because an upgraded home that is less expensive to heat and cool is worth more. Some people have health concerns and the home evaluation looks for evidence of mold or moisture and tests for gas leaks, and the improvements can reduce dust. Finally, people want to do the right thing for the environment. By making these improvements to your home, it will use less energy. If everyone makes small changes, it will lead to a big impact. 20% of America's bad air emissions are the result of energy use in our homes.

House as a system:

- The evaluation is a comprehensive review of your home's energy systems, components and physical condition. It will include a blower door test to determine the amount of air coming into and going out of your home, testing of fuel appliances to determine safety and efficiency, a review of window & door types and condition, a determination of current insulation levels, and a visual inspection of other related issues and conditions.

Can one home really make a difference?

- For the first 100 people that participated fully in the program their energy bill went down by more than 15%, which is \$300-\$400 a year on average. And if you add all the electricity, gas and fuel oil that's been saved it's more than 100 tons of greenhouse gas emissions.