

HEALTH & SAFETY

While the health and safety of clients and crews is paramount in the Weatherization Assistance Program, expenditures are limited to the cost of eliminating energy-related health and safety hazards that are necessary before, or result from, the installation of energy conservation measures. Weatherization Subgrantees often use other funding sources to correct problems that are beyond the scope of allowable DOE weatherization expenditures.

Weatherization agencies conduct only energy-related health and safety measures and are instructed to report health and safety problems that cannot be remedied or mediated by Weatherization activities to the appropriate state agency or the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

Allowable energy-related health and safety activities include, but are not limited to:

- Combustion appliance safety testing.
- Electrical repair (ensuring code compliance when insulating knob-and-tube wiring and repairing overloaded electrical circuits).
- Assessment of fire hazards (identifying inadequate combustion appliance clearances and creosote build up).
- Addressing indoor air quality.
- Lead-Safe Weatherization (limited to procedures for installing Weatherization measures without increasing the existing risk of exposure to lead, but does not include lead abatement).
- Procedures to identify pre-existing health conditions in homes and clients, address these problems, and ensure that Weatherization does not exacerbate these problems.

Weatherization Readiness

The list of issues Weatherization is able to address with DOE Weatherization funds is limited, but the list of issues discovered by technicians conducting the initial home energy audits is not. Technicians discover things like pest infestations, asthma triggers in homes with sensitive residents, slip and fall hazards in homes of the elderly, structural weaknesses and so much more.

The Weatherization Assistance Program is, at its core, an energy efficiency program. The Program's success is largely measured in terms of **energy saved**. The Program recognizes that homes and buildings work as a system of interrelated parts and applies this **"House as a System"** methodology to the assessment and treatment of homes. Weatherization understands it is not effective to insulate an attic if the roof leaks and will degrade the insulation's performance, so the roof is repaired before insulation is installed, or the home is **deferred**.

In recognition of the limitations of WAP funding and the funding possibilities outside of Weatherization, DOE introduced the term **"weatherization readiness"** in 2011.

Weatherization readiness means:

- The home is in appropriate shape to accept the full range of energy conservation measures called for by the appropriate audit or priority list.
- The home does not need any additional health and safety work that cannot be addressed with DOE funds during weatherization.

Incorporating the principle of **"weatherization readiness"** into Weatherization is a two-fold approach, and has two-fold benefits.

The Approach:

- Refine the intake process to determine the best candidates – only scheduling audits for those homes that at intake are perceived as *"weatherization ready."*
- Track deferrals to identify rates of deferral, and the most common causes for deferral.

The Benefits:

Reduce sunk costs. By ensuring the screening process identifies issues that cannot be addressed with DOE Weatherization funds, Subgrantees can reduce those costs dedicated to initial energy audits on homes that will never be weatherized due to such deficiencies (in the program funding as well as the home itself). Time spent scheduling and conducting the initial site data collection for an energy audit is money invested in that home. DOE's aim is every dollar invested goes to the benefit of the eligible client and that only happens if the home gets weatherized.

Improve leveraging capacity. By tracking deferrals, Grantees gain a clear understanding of the most common causes for deferrals in their service territories and can pursue funding to address those specific needs. For example, in many of the cold climate states, rehabilitation funds for roof repair would bring a sizeable amount of older, energy inefficient housing stock into weatherization readiness. Equipped with real data, Grantees improve their chances of securing that funding.