



# Energy Assessment Frequently-Asked Questions (FAQ)

**Q. What is an Energy Assessment?**

**A.** An Energy Assessment is an evaluation of how much energy your home consumes, combined with suggestions on how you can make your home more energy efficient. It identifies the specific issues to address in your home, outlines proposed improvements, and lists local contractors who are qualified to implement the proposed improvements.

**Q. What is the benefit to having an Energy Assessment?**

**A.** The assessment and report will provide a list of recommended energy conservation measures, which outlines estimated cost to install each measure, anticipated annual savings, simple payback, and the estimated CO<sub>2</sub> emissions reduction.

**Q. Does Recycle Ann Arbor make the improvements? If not, will you recommend contractors to make the improvements?**

**A.** No, Recycle Ann Arbor does not implement the proposed improvements. However, we will provide a list of contractors in the area who are qualified to perform the recommended improvements.

**Q. How long does the onsite visit take?**

**A.** The onsite visit will take approximately 2 hours.

**Q. What happens during the Energy Assessment onsite visit?**

**A.** An Energy Professional will collect all the information necessary to generate your assessment report, while answering your energy efficiency questions and pointing out specific improvements that can be made. A typical onsite visit includes a short homeowner survey, a thorough analysis of the building shell including a blower door test, and lighting and mechanical equipment surveys.

**Q. What is the cost of an Energy Assessment?**

**A.** An Energy Assessment will cost \$399 for homes with up to 3,000 square feet of conditioned space, which includes the basement. Homes larger than 3,000 square feet will be quoted a price based on home size, structural complexity, and mechanical complexity.

**Q. Are there rebates or incentives to help cover the cost of the Home Energy Assessment?**

**A.** Yes, DTE Energy and MichCon are currently finalizing a rebate structure for both the Home Energy Assessment, and the improvements recommended in the report. Specific details will be available in early August.

**Q. How much money can I expect to save by utilizing the information available in the Home Energy Assessment?**

**A.** Savings will vary depending on how efficient the home currently is and how much the homeowner is willing to invest in improvements. Our goal is to provide a bundle of recommended improvements that has a simple payback of 8-10 years or less.

**Q. What are Energy Professionals referring to when they speak of the rim and band joist?**

**A.** At the top of the basement wall where the foundation comes in contact with the wood frame, the perimeter framing is called the rim and band joist, sometimes referred to as the bond. This area can be a significant source of drafts, as air is pulled through the house into walls and holes created by plumbing pipes and electrical holes in the subfloor. Properly sealed and installed insulation in this area will reduce the amount of air flow through your home and help to improve its overall efficiency.

**Q. I want to save money on electric costs, but I don't like the light that Compact Fluorescent (CFL) bulbs give off, what can I do?**

**A.** To achieve the best results choose ENERGY STAR rated CFL bulbs. Take time to compare and match the amount of Lumens (a measure of perceived power of light) of the bulb you normally buy to ensure you are getting a bulb that is giving off the same amount of light. There are three color varieties of CFL bulbs: soft white, bright white and day light. The one closest to standard "Thomas Edison" bulbs are the soft white. Dimmable and incandescent-shaped CFL's are also available.

**Q. What does it mean when a CFL bulb is labeled as full spectrum?**

**A.** When a bulb is labeled as full spectrum it means that the product will mimic natural light. According to the National Lighting Product Information Program, full spectrum bulbs are best suited for use when color identification is important to the work being done. Graphic artists, museums and color printing applications are all examples of when full spectrum lighting may be useful.

**Q. What about the mercury in CFL bulbs?**

**A.** It is true that CFL bulbs contain mercury. According to information provided by ENERGY STAR, their rated CFL bulbs usually contain around 5 milligrams of mercury. For comparison, the thermostat you may have on your wall contains about 4 grams of mercury. Even though CFL bulbs contain mercury, using them contributes less mercury to the environment than using regular incandescent bulbs, because they consume much less electricity in operation. This reduces the amount of energy that coal fired power plants (the biggest source of mercury air emissions) need to produce. According to the federal government if every American home replaced one light bulb with an ENERGY STAR approved CFL the United States would save enough energy to light more than 2.5 million homes for a year and prevent green house gases equivalent to the emissions of nearly 800,000 cars.

**Q. How do I dispose of my CFL bulb at the end of its useful life?**

**A.** You can recycle your CFL bulb at the Recycle Ann Arbor Drop-Off Station for a nominal fee. The Drop-Off Station is located at 2950 East Ellsworth, Ann Arbor MI 48108. If your ENERGY STAR qualified CFL product burns out before it should, look at the CFL base to find the manufacturer's name. Visit the manufacturer's web site to find the customer service contact information to inquire about a refund or replacement. Manufacturers producing ENERGY STAR qualified CFLs are required to offer at least a two-year limited warranty (covering manufacturer defects) for CFLs used at home. Save your receipts to document the date of purchase.

**Q. What should I do if my CLF bulb breaks?**

**A.** Because CFLs contain a small amount of mercury, the Environmental Protection Agency has recommendations for proper clean-up and disposal guidelines. Check out their website for more information <http://www.epa.gov/hg/spills/>.

**Q. Can a house be too airtight?**

**A.** Yes, according to the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE) User's Manual ANSI/ASHRAE Standard 62.2-2004 Ventilation and Acceptable Indoor Air Quality in Low-Rise Residential Buildings, ventilation rates are dependent on the volume of conditioned space in the house. Tightness is often determined by the measured Natural Air Changes per Hour (NACH) in a home. Generally, if a home is too tight it implies that there is not sufficient air cycling through the home, which can lead to poor indoor air quality. If your home is too tight, your Energy Professional will most likely recommend a mechanical ventilation system.