

Weatherization Grows in the Green Mountain State

Vermont's history is rooted in a tradition of economic independence and a strong connection to the land. The state prioritizes programs that protect the environment and improve the standard of living for all residents. A prime example is Vermont's partnership with the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) to implement the Weatherization Assistance Program (Weatherization). Weatherization reduces energy costs for low-income households by improving the energy efficiency of their homes, while ensuring their health and safety. Weatherization reduces the disproportionate energy burden on low-income families and helps them become self-sufficient. Reducing residential energy demand also decreases environmental impacts associated with energy production and consumption.

A PRESENCE WITH A PAST

The 1970s were a milestone for Vermont's environmental and energy policies. The decade marked the prohibition of billboard advertising and the inception of the Weatherization Program. When the program began, temporary measures, like covering windows with plastic sheets, were emphasized. Today, it has evolved into a sophisticated program that employs professionally trained crews who use advanced technology to weatherize homes. Vermont's Office of Economic Opportunity administers the program and a network of five local agencies delivers weatherization services to eligible residents across the state.

Weatherization crews receive technical certification from Southeastern Vermont Community Action in Westminister. Crews use the computerized Market Manager audit tool to determine the most cost-effective measures for a single-family home or multi-family dwelling. Air leaks and pressure imbalances within the home are detected by diagnostic tools like the blower door and manometer. Vermont crews test gas furnaces and appliances for carbon monoxide, a colorless, odorless gas that can be deadly in large quantities.

NATIONAL WEATHERIZATION PROGRAM

Homes weatherized in 1999	68,000
DOE allocations in 1999	\$135 million
Average annual energy cost savings per household	\$300
Average space heating savings	25-30%
Energy benefits returned for every \$1 invested	\$2.10
Jobs supported	7,000

VERMONT

Homes weatherized in 1999 (with DOE \$)	1,230
DOE funding in 1999	\$749,737
Clients served in 1999	2,925
Elderly	18%
People with disabilities	10%
Families with children	14%

Client education on energy efficiency and on the proper use and maintenance of the installed weatherization measures is an integral step in the process. One client commented, "The time the crew and the auditor/completion worker spent showing me how to use energy savings devices and explaining why they did what they did was absolutely invaluable. They worked enormously hard and still took great pains to educate me."

TAPPING FOR SUPPORT

Vermont taps thousands of trees to provide the largest supply of maple syrup in the United States. Vermont also taps state resources to provide additional funds for Weatherization. In 1990, the Vermont legislature passed bill H832, which created the Weatherization Trust Fund (WTF). The WTF provides state funds for weatherization activities through a half percent gross receipts tax on all non-transportation fuels sold in the state. Carol Porter*, a weatherization client from Brattleboro, wrote in support of this new tax, "I know that it's hard to decide which programs to support with the tax dollars that are available but I am so glad that this program was one that was funded. I am just so grateful that this program is here and able to help so many people that couldn't do it on their own." WTF increased annual funding for Weatherization by \$3 million.



Weatherization crews in Vermont inspect heating systems for health and safety precautions and replace air filters as a low-cost energy saving measure.

A GOOD COMBINATION

Unique flavor combinations have been profitable for the Vermont-based Ben & Jerry's ice cream company, and creative partnerships have worked for Weatherization. In 1997, Weatherization participated in the Residential Energy Efficiency Program (REEP), to reduce energy costs and promote the affordability of multi-family housing. This ongoing collaboration has implemented \$1.2 million in energy efficiency improvements that reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 1,042 tons per year and yield annual energy savings of \$225,000.

Weatherization activities traditionally addressed heating and cooling energy use, but the program has expanded to address whole-house energy usage. In March 2000, Weatherization partnered with Efficiency Vermont to promote residential electric base load efficiency.

A MOUNTAIN OF BENEFITS

Since the inception of the program, 32,000 Vermont homes have been weatherized and numerous benefits have been created. On October 3, 2000, U.S. Senator James Jeffords testified to the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee, "Weatherization is one of the best investments this nation makes with its tax dollars."

But Weatherization is more than a sound investment for low-income households, it also creates economic benefits for the community. The program reduces the export of energy dollars from the community, which keeps more money in the local economy. Weatherization provides job opportunities for more than 70 energy professionals to operate the program. Additional jobs are created for subcontractors and material suppliers.

Reducing residential energy demand decreases electricity generation and avoids emissions of nitrogen oxides, sulphur dioxide, and other pollutants. This improves local air quality and reduces adverse health effects, particularly asthma. Weatherization measures also mitigate residential and power plant emissions of greenhouse gases, including carbon dioxide.

WEATHERIZATION WORKS!

Weatherization produces an impressive range of energy, economic, and environmental benefits for low-income households and communities. Nationally, for every \$1 invested in the program, Weatherization returns \$2.10 in energy-related benefits. Weatherization measures reduce national energy consumption and curb demand for imported oil. Weatherization works for Vermont and America!

**Names have been changed to protect the privacy of the subjects.*



TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE WEATHERIZATION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM, CONTACT:

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Visit the Weatherization Web site at: www.eren.doe.gov/buildings/weatherization_assistance
or call the Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy Clearinghouse at: 1-800-DOE-3732



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