

Los Angeles County Energy Program

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is the Los Angeles County Energy Program?

- The LA County Energy Program will help homeowners make improvements their homes to be more livable and comfortable—while saving on energy bills.
- It's really a triple-win program: homeowners benefit, the economy benefits, and the environment benefits.
 - It will help homeowners get rebates that could total as much as \$5,000 for energy-saving renovations *and* save money on their utility bills
 - It will create *thousands* of good-paying, green jobs in LA County
 - And the program will reduce energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions

Who is funding this?

- Funding for developing the program is coming from the federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act—what's being called the stimulus plan.
- It's important to note that the program will not cost the County or cities any money—no money will come from general funds.

How does the program work?

- **Upgrade Packages.** Homeowners will have a choice of upgrade packages and options that qualify for rebates and incentives, from basic weatherization, insulation and sealing the house to increase its efficiency—to installing double-paned windows, more efficient air conditioners and even solar panels.
- **Rebates.** The program will provide a one-stop-shop where homeowners can find consolidated information about all the federal, state, County and utility rebates and incentives that are available.
- **20% Efficiency.** The aim is to achieve at least a 20% reduction in energy consumption in existing homes—and, of course, reduce utility bills. That's very achievable. According to the US Department of Energy, existing techniques and technologies can reduce energy use by up to 40% per home.
- **Home Energy Evaluations.** To help decide what upgrades to do, homeowners can have a certified energy advisor come to their house and perform a thorough diagnostic analysis, using infrared cameras, blowers and computer modeling.

- **Certified Contractors.** To do the work, homeowners will choose from a large pool of certified contractors Countywide who are experts in energy efficiency and certified by the Building Performance Institute, an organization that works with the Department of Energy and the Environmental Protection Agency.
- **Quality Assurance.** There's quality assurance built in, with both scheduled and spot checks of the work done.
- **Financing.** We know that money is tight and it's not easy to pay for these upgrades. The program includes an innovative financing package so homeowners don't have to shoulder the upfront costs, which can be a real barrier to making improvements. Homeowners repay the loan over 15 years as a line item on their property taxes. Also, the loan is not dependent on your credit rating. If you sell the house, the loan stays with the house—because the upgrades stay with the house.

What would the typical homeowner experience be?

- The typical LA County home would need about \$4,000-\$4,500 in basic home performance improvements to reach 20% energy savings.
 - That could be reduced by about \$1,000 in rebates, so the net cost would be around \$3,000 to \$3,500. Plus, through the end of the year, you can get a federal tax credit equal to 30% of the work—up to \$1,500.
 - You would also save just over \$450 a year in utility bills—that's at *today's* costs for energy. You'd recoup your net costs in about 5 years.
 - And you'd have a more comfortable home right away.
- Many homeowners will decide to participate, for example, when they need a new air conditioner. By doing the basic weatherizing and insulating first, they might find they need a smaller and less expensive air conditioner, because they are no longer leaking cold air into the neighborhood.

Why is this important to the environment?

- Our homes emit about 20% of the greenhouse gases in the County.
- About half of LA County homes were built before 1973, when modern residential building codes came into effect. Homes leak out hot air in the winter and cold air in the summer. It's like watching your hard-earned cash fly out the doors, windows, and ceilings of inefficient homes.
- Inefficient homes use more energy, which causes even more greenhouse gas emissions.

How will this create jobs?

- The overall construction sector currently faces a 27% unemployment rate. Many construction workers are anxious to find ways to apply their skills to new green jobs that

can be sustained over the long-term.

- The County is working with various training groups to actively increase the participating pool of contractors who have been certified by the Building Performance Institute.

When does the program start?

- The program itself is still under construction. We're talking with homeowners, contractors, community groups and cities throughout the County to be sure the program elements meet their needs.
- The program will launch by July 1 with financing available in September.