

# Doug Rye *says ...*



## *Energy Efficiency Commandment No. 7: Thou shalt not believe everything you hear*

“For unto us a child is born.” Oh man I love the Christmas season and having grandchildren doesn’t hurt that one bit.

As I mentioned last month, we have so very much for which to be thankful this holiday season. And electricity is certainly one of the most important things. I am still reviewing the lists that many of you have submitted about additional uses for electricity. Please be patient with me and I promise I will name the winner in next month’s column.

I have been teaching folks about energy efficiency for over 30 years and I tell you, there is more information available today about that subject than at any other time in history. It seems that everyone has an interest and opinion about saving our world and helping people have lower utility bills. Every day I see energy tips on television, in magazines, newspapers and even direct mail pieces sent to the house. You can go to the Internet and read about energy efficiency for hours. Most of the stuff I see says something like this: “Saves up to 50 percent on your heating and cooling costs.” If that were true, I would suggest you do just two of the items and save 100 percent. If only it were that easy. Actually folks, up to 50 percent means anything from 1 percent to 50 percent. If that product saved you 10 percent it would meet the claim. Simply stated, there are lots of folks out there trying to sell you something. It is my opinion that few, if any, of the advertised products regarding energy savings actually will give you the advertised savings.

This may come as a shock to you, but misleading advertising is not new. About 25 years ago, I developed what is still known as the Doug Rye Super Energy-Efficient house. It also happened to be very “green” but that color wasn’t as important in those days. The Doug Rye house had cellulose insulation, lots of caulking, energy-efficient windows,

tight ductwork and a geothermal heat pump. When people built their houses in this manner, they could heat and cool a 1,200-square-foot house for about 50 cents per day or \$15 per month. One day a national company came to me and said if you will use our product in your houses we will guarantee a 30-percent savings on heating and cooling costs. Well, I figured 30 percent of \$15 is \$4.50 a month. I asked what it cost to use their product on a 1,200-square-foot house and he said, “\$1,100.” Well, I immediately knew this was not a good investment. I also knew his product wouldn’t do anything to make a Doug Rye house more efficient.

But they persisted and showed me a four-page warranty of which I read every single word using a magnifying glass. The warranty said to file a claim one must submit a copy of the last 12 months’ utility bills prior to the installation of the product and a copy of 12 months’ utility bills after the installation of the product. The claim must be filed in the 13th month after the product was installed. I noticed that the name of the warranty company was at the end of the form so I called them for more information. When I talked to the man at the warranty company he wasn’t even familiar with the product I was asking him about. He told me his bonding company had placed warranties on hundreds of products and just assumed they would have to pay a few claims. They intentionally made it as difficult as possible to file the claim, he added.

Well, at least he was honest about it. Folks, just remember there are a lot of people trying to take your green by claiming to be green. Please listen to me and don’t believe everything you hear.

On a lighter note, I would like to wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. See you in 2010!