



Smart Scale

Here's how to make the EnergySmart Home Scale work for you.

By Steve Easley

In my seminars on high-performance homes, I often get asked how you convince homeowners to pay more for energy-efficient features in a new home. The DOE EnergySmart Home Scale, or E-Scale, can be just what you need to set yourself apart from builders who market themselves as providing the biggest home for the lowest square foot cost. (See the E-Scale, next page.)

We all know this price-per-square-foot mentality inherently drives down energy performance, durability, and quality. It certainly contributes to the McMansion syndrome.

A New Metric

Why would builders go beyond the code if home buyers won't pay more for a higher performing home? Home buyers are using the only metrics they have to make purchase decisions when shopping for a home, which is: "How many square feet of space can I get for the lowest price?" Builders are forced to respond to this misguided customer demand in their product offerings to compete. The bottom line

is that there's no major incentive for builders to build homes more efficient than code.

In all fairness to consumers, they get a lot of conflicting and confusing information regarding energy efficiency. In their marketing brochures, many builders proudly tout the R-values and energy components of their homes as if they were something more than the code minimum, which, by the way, is the least energy efficient home by law that they can build.

It is knowledge that opens buyers' wallets. The only reason any customer will pay more for anything is because they believe they will be better off. In the absence of knowledge, price will always be the consumers' yardstick to measure value. They won't pay more for energy-efficient features unless they understand why it's a good investment.

Comparison Tool

It's important for builders to remember that a home sale is partially based on trust, and trust is based on credibility. This where the new E-Scale

and home energy ratings help. The E-Scale is similar to a MPG sticker on a new car. The E-Scale was developed from the knowledge acquired by the Building America program under the DOE.

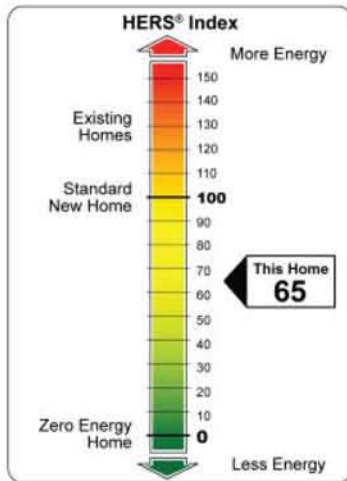
The E-Scale is based on the well-established Home Energy Rating System (HERS) Index. This is a national program so builders and consumers can feel confident that it is an apples-to-apples comparison tool to rate the efficiency of homes—everyone is using the same yardstick.

The EnergySmart Home Scale is a scale from 0 to 150. The lower the score the more efficient the home. A home that has a zero rating is a net-zero energy home, meaning it produces as much energy as it uses. A typical existing home would score about 130 and a typical new home built to the 2004 energy code would be about 100.

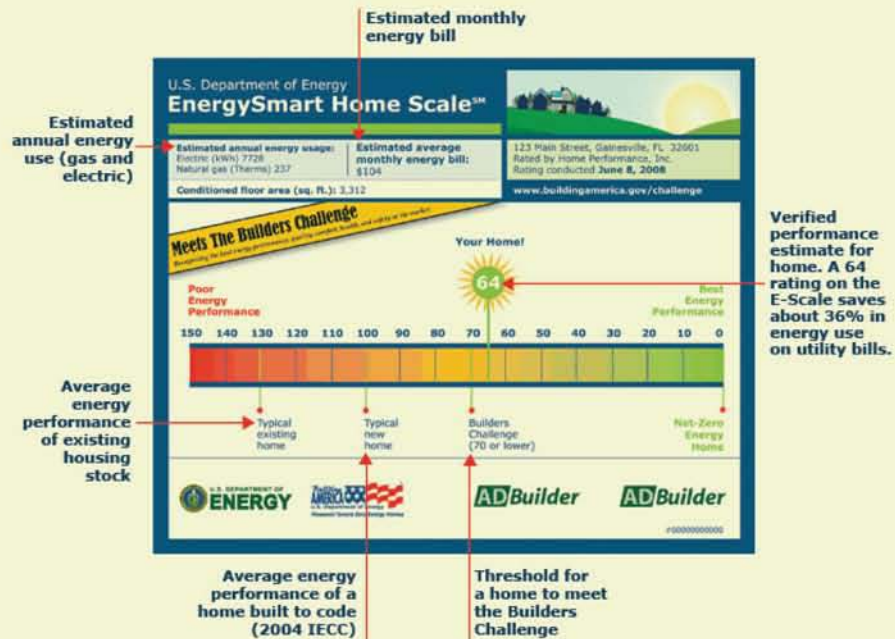
This scale is based on the Residential Energy Services Network (Resnet) HERS Index. Resnet develops standards for home energy and is officially recognized by the federal government as a verifier of building energy performance. Resnet is a nonprofit organization and offers accreditation for training providers that produce certified energy raters. Builders

The Real Deal

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Use a HERS scale to show your home buyers why you are suggesting energy-efficient techniques and products for their new house.



| Statistics | June 2010 |
|--|-------------|
| Number of Homes that Meet the Builders Challenge | 2,619 |
| Number of Registered Builders | 569 |
| Number of Manufacturer, Program, Resource, and Verifier Partners | 478 |
| Total Estimated Annual Energy Savings (MMBTU/yr) | 101,623 |
| Total Estimated Annual Energy Savings (\$/yr) | \$2,594,487 |
| Annual Estimated CO ₂ Savings (tons) | 10,879 |

The Builders Challenge program will drive consumer demand for higher performing homes, which will benefit the industry as a whole.

use these certified third-party raters to verify the energy performance via the HERS rating standards.

Because of Resnet, builders and consumers have a reliable, nationally accepted way to gauge the energy performance potential of homes. This is a big deal because houses consume about 25% of the energy we use in this country.

By using the E-Scale, builders can show home buyers the advantages of buying a

higher performing, more durable home—and it also makes it easier to explain to buyers why a certain HVAC system or added insulation costs more.

Building to higher standards will result in fewer callbacks, increased profitability, and happier customers, who will enjoy lower energy bills and a more comfortable house. Plus, these buyers may even qualify for lower mortgage rates through energy-efficient mortgage programs.

Ambitious Goals

The DOE wants every consumer to have the opportunity to buy a cost-neutral, net-zero energy home by 2030. Homes that qualify

As the EnergySmart Home Scale (above) shows, the existing home stock in America has a 130 HERS rating; a typical new home built to 2004 IECC is 100. Builders Challenge homes must come in at 70 or below.

for the Builders Challenge must achieve 70 or lower on the EnergySmart Home Scale (see the Builders Challenge stats, left). The Builders Challenge is a voluntary program designed to help builders differentiate their higher energy performing homes from homes built to code.

Both the Energy Smart Scale and the Builders Challenge program will drive consumer demand for higher performing homes, which will benefit the industry just as consumer demand fueled the need for a new breed of more fuel-efficient vehicles.

If you're a builder, one the best ways to transform and grow your business is to adopt the E-Scale rating for your homes.

For more information visit: www1.eere.energy.gov/buildings/challenge GB

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