

Have You Run Into RESNET Yet?

Danny Keating of the HVAC Insider La/Ms recently had a conversation with Audrey Evans, a New Orleans-based energy rater who has been involved with RESNET since 2000.

Danny Keating: What is RESNET, anyway?



Audrey Evans: The Residential Energy Services Network is a national organization that over the past decade has developed training, quality assurance standards, and policy for the burgeoning home energy evaluation industry, RESNET is a “go-to” group for anyone interested in how to understand building energy flows through a quantitative approach, showing specific Return on Investment data for the specific building being analyzed. RESNET standards are the highest ones available, for “how to do it right” and who can help, throughout the U.S. (and also abroad).

Danny: Why should A/C Contractors be interested?

Audrey: The concerns of energy raters and A/C contractors naturally overlap, but energy raters take a “whole building” approach in a way that complements the work of the A/C contractor. A/C Contractors Are Increasingly Collaborating with Home Energy Raters. We do air infiltration testing, duct testing and computer analysis of the energy flows in buildings, to help show what the A/C needs are and how that capacity could be reduced with energy efficiency upgrades, for a better performing building that costs less to run. Many energy raters also perform Manual J calculations, which largely track the REM/Rate software that most raters use. The infiltration testing that energy raters do initially - as independent, third-party verifiers - can help A/C contractors with their own sizing calculations, and the duct testing after the A/C installation can show the client that the job was well done.

Danny: Who is promoting energy ratings?

Audrey: HVAC contractors are increasingly being asked by both residential and commercial clients to conform to particular energy efficiency specifications, which government incentive programs are requiring at all levels -local, State, and Federal levels. As a result, clients are becoming more savvy about the need to “go the extra mile” and pay for quality installations, in order to save on monthly operating expenses (and sometimes getting cash rebates and tax credits for it).

Danny: What about all the greenbuilding programs that have been springing up?

Audrey: Many of these programs - for new construction as well as retrofits - require energy raters with special training, called “green raters.” For example, if an A/C contractor is on a job pursuing certification through the National Association of Homebuilders’ Greenbuilding program, an energy rater might be involved. Like the national energy code, there are often Prescriptive or Performance paths to meeting the requirements. RESNET-certified energy raters are likely to be the ones verifying that the items on the Performance path were achieved. This is certainly the case for LEED projects (Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design), the building certification

program of the U.S. Greenbuilding Council, which has been growing at phenomenal rates. It's also true of the Enterprise Green Communities program, which is like LEED, but designed for affordable building projects. There are many such programs now, and A/C contractors are more and more likely to be asked to get involved at some point or another.

Danny: How can I find out more?

Audrey: The website for RESNET is www.resnet.us. It lists the certified raters in each State, defines what an energy audit and a rating are, and gives a lot of useful information for anyone involved in the housing industry, including those on the mortgage & financing side. RESNET's annual conference will be Feb. 22-24 in Orlando, FL, which will provide opportunities to learn more about how A/C contractors can become part of the RESNET Contracting Services network, among other things. The "whole house" approach involves the need for teamwork among the professionals involved in building projects, and as a result, both A/C contractors and energy raters will need to learn how to work together over time, especially as the energy efficiency and home performance industries grow and more greenbuilding programs are offered locally.