

New program promotes energy efficiency



By Tom Decker February 22, 2012 [Post a comment](#)

Tom Decker is sales director at Smart Sealed, an insulation and weatherization company. As an Energy Impact Illinois contractor, Smart Sealed implements energy efficiency recommendations for employees who benefit from their employer's Employer-Assisted Housing-Retrofit program. Read on to learn about this innovative new employer benefit and Smart Sealed's critical role in helping reduce people's home energy use and costs.

We've all heard the tagline: Reduce, reuse, recycle. The reason "reduce" is listed first is that it is the easiest way to conserve energy, preserve natural resources, and save money on utility bills. Plus, there's great opportunity to reduce: For both businesses and homes, energy costs are the third most expensive budgetary item, after the building and the people in it.

The first step is an energy audit. Energy audits identify air leakage and recommend steps to insulate and seal the building. As one of the contractors that provides energy audits and implements the improvements for Energy Impact Illinois, a statewide program to make buildings more efficient, I can tell you that the most common air leakage culprits are recessed can lights, additions to the original footprint of the house (beyond the original foundation), and weatherstripping around the windows and doors. Often, simple steps such as caulking windows and doors, weatherstripping and sealing recessed can lights will dramatically reduce energy waste and utility bills, and make your home or office more comfortable.

Business owners who want to cut energy consumption at their facility can take advantage of [free, state-sponsored energy audits and tax credits](#). In addition, many utility companies offer incentives up to \$200,000 for improving lighting, mechanical systems and the building's "thermal envelope" – the shell of the building as a barrier to unwanted heat loss. Visit EnergyImpactIllinois.org to learn more.

Through the brand-new Employer-Assisted Housing-Retrofit (EAH-R) program, Illinois employers can help their workers waste less energy at home -- making life more comfortable and affordable. Specifically, EAH-R provides employees with a free home energy audit to identify the most energy-efficient renovations; and up to \$6,000, from an employer contribution and matching funds provided by the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, to help make those home improvements, such as adding insulation, updating appliances, and installing windows. The Metropolitan Planning Council administers the program, making it an easy, outsourced benefit. As an added bonus, employer assistance may qualify for state tax credits.

[MPC staff](#) can answer questions and help employers set up the EAH Retrofit program.