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Reviewing **Property Disclosures** and **Touring Homes**

Energy Efficiency Clues | Energy Use per Square Foot | Red Flags

Energy Use per Square Foot

An easy way to compare homes and find available rebates

You'll need

- Square Footage (*just heated living space, if possible*).
- Approximate amount of heating fuel(s) used in a year.

Online Calculators

- efficiencyvermont.com/tips-tools/tools/efficiency-estimator
Compares the home to an average Vermont home.
- hhi.nhsaves.com/homeheating
Tells you whether the home may qualify for rebates based on energy use.

Red Flags

Clues that energy efficiency upgrades could be more difficult or costly

- **Damp or Wet Basement** – Humidity issues should be addressed prior to insulating or air sealing the basement to avoid creating or worsening problems with mold, mildew, and rot.
- **Mold and Mildew** – If mold and mildew already exist due to excess moisture, this should be addressed before taking residence and before any additional air sealing takes place in the home.
- **Asbestos and Vermiculite** – Used in some older homes as insulation and considered hazardous to your health. Must be removed or isolated prior to completing energy efficiency improvements.
- **Knob and Tube Wiring** – An early method of wiring homes used through the 1930s. Knob and tube wiring is no longer installed, has no grounding system, and may create problems in obtaining homeowners' insurance. Current code prohibits covering knob and tube wiring with cellulose or expanding foam insulation, so wiring must be updated before insulation improvements can be made.
- **Radon** – A radioactive, colorless, odorless, tasteless gas that occurs naturally in some soils and rock. Energy efficiency improvements can improve OR worsen existing radon issues. Concerned homeowners should budget for additional radon testing and remediation during energy upgrades.

Included in the VT / NH **Property Disclosure Form**

Sellers are allowed to leave fields blank, feel free to ask about missing information

- Heating system and fuel usage
- Hot water system
- Electrical system
- Annual electricity use (*VT only*)
- Insulation (*required in NH*)
- Roof (*e.g. age and leaks*)
- Basement (*e.g. moisture issues*)
- Hazards (*e.g. Asbestos insulation*)
- Alternative Energy
(*e.g. solar panels*) (*VT only*)

Energy Efficiency Clues

Questions to ask and things to look for as you tour homes

Hot Water

1. Newer water heaters are also more efficient. Older units can be replaced with high efficiency water heaters with rebates from Efficiency Vermont and NHSaves.
2. Exposed pipes and ducts can be wrapped in insulation, and ducts can be air-sealed for low-cost energy savings.

Insulation – The following are signs of easy, cost effective energy saving opportunities

1. Interior basement walls are uncovered, just bare cement showing
2. No rigid foam board visible outside beneath the siding or along foundation walls
3. Attic floor is covered with little insulation and/or old insulation



Considering an Electric Car? Look for “**electrical system amps**” listed in your property disclosure. When charging an electric vehicle, 200 amp service will make it easier to run other large appliances while charging your car. A load calculation can be performed by a qualified contractor. More at Energy.gov/EERE/ElectricVehicles/Charging-Home.

Lighting – What kind of light bulbs are visible? Upgrading lightbulbs can yield easy energy savings.

- Incandescent bulbs are least efficient
- Compact fluorescent bulbs are more efficient but contain mercury and pose a disposal hazard
- LED bulbs are most efficient – always install LEDs when replacing light bulbs

Windows – It is rarely cost effective to replace windows solely to improve energy efficiency. That money would be better spent on air sealing and insulation.

1. Single pane or double pane? If you can't tell, shine a light directly at the glass. Two spots of light reflected means two panes of glass. More panes = more efficient.
2. Ask whether the house comes with storm windows, which can help reduce winter heat loss.



Other Questions to Ask

- Has the seller ever completed a home energy audit? If so, ask for a copy of the report.
- Has the seller had any air sealing or insulation work done?
- How old are the major appliances? (Newer appliances are usually more efficient; and ENERGY STAR certified appliances are even better)