



Building an Energy-efficient Home? 10 Questions to Ask Your Builder



Before building an energy-efficient home, ask your builder these 10 questions:

1 Any builder can claim to build energy-efficient homes. How do I know that your homes are truly energy efficient?

The energy efficiency of a home can be measured using Natural Resources Canada's (NRCan's) EnerGuide rating system. The EnerGuide rating system determines the home's level of energy efficiency on a scale from 1 to 100. Energy-efficient new homes rate at least 80. Homes that use no purchased energy have a rating of 100.

The national R-2000* Initiative and regional energy efficiency initiatives – such as ENERGY STAR® for New Homes, the Power Smart New Home Program, Built Green™ and GreenHome – require homes to meet minimum EnerGuide ratings.

Find out if your builder participates in a program such as R-2000 or if the home will receive an EnerGuide rating of 80 or higher.

2 Because all builders must meet the requirements of the building code, what makes your homes different from other builders' homes?

Homes built with high EnerGuide ratings, such as those with a rating over 80, generally go beyond the energy requirements of the building code. They are more energy efficient, which can translate into lower energy costs. Often, these homes offer better indoor air quality and include environmentally responsible products in their construction. Ask your builder how much more energy efficient their homes are compared with minimum building code requirements.

3 How do your building techniques reflect the latest developments in housing technology?

Builders who are participating in programs such as EnerGuide are often part of a network of trained, innovative professionals who voluntarily include the EnerGuide rating process in their home building.

The R-2000 Standard is an evolving standard that reflects more than 25 years of research and development by the Government of Canada and the home-building industry. This standard provides the foundation for technical requirements of regional energy efficiency initiatives, such as ENERGY STAR for New Homes, the Power Smart New Home Program, Built Green, GreenHome and Novoclimat™.

Builders using these initiatives are often committed to being industry leaders and take training to be aware of the latest developments in home-building technology.

4 What steps do you take to improve the energy efficiency of the homes you build?

Builders interested in improving the performance of their homes often use higher levels of insulation, incorporate passive solar energy into their designs, install high-performance heating and ventilation systems, and use thorough air sealing to improve energy efficiency and to ensure improved indoor air quality.

5 Can you predict what my energy costs will be?

Your home's energy costs will depend on such factors as the size of your family. If your builder participates in any of the programs mentioned in this brochure, he or she should be able to give you an estimate of how much energy your house will use each year. Because the living patterns of occupants vary, the estimate will be based on standard operating assumptions. You can use that information to calculate an estimate for future energy costs.

6 What makes your homes more environmentally friendly than others?

Homes account for 17 percent of all energy used in Canada. Homes that have higher EnerGuide ratings work to lower that statistic because they are more energy efficient and produce fewer greenhouse gas emissions that harm our environment.

Also, environmentally conscious builders often use "green" building materials, encourage the use of energy-efficient appliances and produce less waste material during construction.

7 Do you participate in the Government of Canada's energy efficiency initiatives for new homes?

Builders that participate in programs such as R-2000 must be registered and licensed by NRCan. This enables NRCan to monitor builder certifications, training and marketing initiatives, and to perform quality assurance on R-2000 certified homes. Builders that voluntarily participate in these programs are proud of their achievements and are open to explaining the features of their homes that will benefit you.

8 Do you affix a government-backed energy label to the home?

Homes built under the national R-2000 Initiative and regional energy efficiency initiatives – such as the Power Smart New Home Program, Built Green and GreenHome – receive an official EnerGuide label or a label designed for a specific regional initiative, such as the ENERGY STAR for New Homes label or Novoclimat label.

These labels contain contact information, specify the initiative under which the house was built and can help with resale because prospective buyers can see proof of an independent endorsement of your home's energy efficiency.

9 Do independent, licensed professionals inspect the quality of your homes?

NRCan conducts random quality assurance on R-2000 certified homes, ENERGY STAR qualified new homes and EnerGuide labelled homes. This quality assurance ensures that these programs have credibility and integrity.

10 Do you build homes that receive an EnerGuide rating of 80 or higher?

Find out if your builder is constructing your home in partnership with regional energy efficiency initiatives – such as ENERGY STAR for New Homes, the Power Smart New Home Program, Built Green, GreenHome and Novoclimat – or if the home will receive an EnerGuide rating label of 80 or higher.

Not getting the answers you want?

Visit newhomes.nrcan.gc.ca/findaparticipant so you can ask a licensed builder of energy-efficient homes.

For more information about NRCan's energy efficiency initiatives for newly built homes, visit the Office of Energy Efficiency's Web site at newhomes.nrcan.gc.ca.

Or write to

ecoENERGY for Buildings and Houses (newly built homes)
Office of Energy Efficiency
Natural Resources Canada
580 Booth Street, 18th Floor
Ottawa ON K1A 0E4

To order publications about energy efficiency for new houses, call 1-800-387-2000 (toll-free).

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Leading Canadians to Energy Efficiency at Home, at Work and on the Road



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