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Office of Energy Efficiency & Renewable Energy

DOE Zero Energy Ready Home

Zero Energy Ready Home Newsletter: July 2015

A Note From Sam Rashkin: Speaking of Zero: No to 'Net-', Yes to 'Ready'

You can't start a movement if no one can agree on a name. Is it a Net-Zero Energy Home, a Zero Net-Energy Home, a Zero Energy Home, or a Zero Energy Ready Home? The first key question we need to ask is; why use the word 'Net' to modify the word 'Zero' or 'Energy'? We've seen 'Net' used both ways extensively even though it deflates the power of the word 'Zero' or adds confusion to the term 'Energy'? As is often said, "perfection is the enemy of the good." We believe the interest in the word 'Net', while filled with good intentions about accuracy, undermines our ability to communicate the zero experience faster and better to the consumer audience. That's why we say no to 'Net.'

All this begs the next question. Why add an additional word, 'Ready', to the term Zero Energy Home? It's because 'Ready' is a critical modifier that enables ultra-efficient homes with or without solar to be marketed with one effective 'brand'. An ultra-efficient home without solar, is clearly not a zero energy home. But it is 'Ready' for zero with the future purchase of a solar electric system or carbon offsets. It's especially ready for zero when simple low- and no-cost measures are included that allow a solar electric system to be installed in the future at minimal additional cost. Thus, 'Zero Energy Ready' is an effective way for ultra-efficient homes without solar to leverage the power of 'Zero' in a fair home label.

In ultra-efficient homes with a properly sized solar electric system, it's still important to use the word 'Ready' in the name because there are a myriad of homeowner behaviors, occupancy levels, weather conditions, plug loads, and utility power-purchase service fees that can result in a non-zero utility bill experience. The term 'Ready' protects the builder from what is often an unrealistic promise of a zero utility bill implied by the name Zero Energy Home, sets homeowner expectations for the possibility of non-zero utility bills, and effectively starts the education

process about the importance of how the home is used. This is a good thing. That's why we say yes to 'Ready.'

Why discuss these terminology rules now? It's because zero energy is poised for substantial growth. Our program team is observing substantially more interest in the label, greater builder and developer commitments, and increasing requests for training and presentations all across the country. A common term and definition are critical for effective consumer awareness, understanding, and loyalty (branding '101'). The [Zero Energy Ready Home](#) program invites all zero stakeholders to join us using these important terminology rules for engaging consumers: lose the 'Net', and never leave 'Home' without 'Ready.'

Time to Engage American Consumers: Tour of Zero is Launching

The DOE Zero Energy Ready Home web site is about to launch an exciting new addition, the 'Tour of Zero'. Consumers all across the country will be able to see how the home of the future offers a better experience and is available today. Users will be taken on a virtual tour of great examples of Zero Energy Ready Homes in their climate zone. For each home, visitors can view images of the home's exterior, interior and technical solutions (in that order); learn about the better experience from powerful homeowner and builder testimonials; view floor plans, examine key metrics including incredibly low energy bills, basic house statistics, and HERS Index Scores. The tour will also link them directly to the [Zero Energy Ready Home locator](#) to find a builder.



Let DOE Help Tell Your Story

By constructing certified DOE Zero Energy Ready Homes, there are impressive value propositions to offer your prospective homebuyers. However, liability constraints or concerns can often block builders' ability to use preferred messaging. Meanwhile, DOE is vested in the success of Zero Energy Ready Home partners communicating the value of this important label. As a result, the Zero Energy Ready Homes team

followed great guidance from participants at our most recent Leading Production Builder Round-Table meeting and developed a solution.

Partners can now leverage our Drop-in Messaging which provides a wide array of pre-approved messages for insertion into your promotional materials, media articles, press releases, and signage. Many of these quotes can be customized by inserting your company name. They speak to why certified Zero Energy Ready Homes like yours live, last, and work better and how they are only constructed by a select group of builders in the nation that have committed to the extraordinary level of high-performance excellence specified by a trusted authority, the U.S. Department of Energy. The Drop-in Messaging document is located under Marketing Materials in your [Partner Profile](#). Take advantage of this resource; you owe it to yourself to tell your story, or you give it away.

Zero Energy Ready Home at Appraisal Institute Annual Conference

A frequently cited concern by high-performance home builders is getting the appraisal process to recognize the added value of their homes. It's a process, but the process has a good start. The Appraisal Institute provides a Green Appraiser training program and Green Appraisal Addendum that today helps high-performance builders get higher value assessments for their homes. Sam Rashkin will join the industry leader of green appraisal movement, Sandra Adomatis, along with CR Herro from Meritage Homes at the [Appraisal Institute Annual Conference](#), July 27 in Dallas to continue this outreach and education.

California-Specific DOE Zero Energy Ready Specs Updated

DOE has updated its original California-specific requirements for the program, with the release of [DOE Zero Energy Ready Home California Requirements – Revision 5](#), which goes into effect for homes permitted after August 10, 2015. Revision 5 for California adds numerous clarifications which have also been added to the national Rev.05 specifications. The CA spec revision also offers more flexibility in terms of air tightness requirements (attached dwellings have a higher ACH50 spec), and alignment with upcoming Title 24 provisions such as the High Performance Attic (HPA) design strategy as a method for optimizing the duct system (see End Note 15 H).

Under Rev.05 of the DOE Zero Energy Ready Home California Requirements, builders certifying homes in California continue to have the options of prescriptive compliance, a performance option using

national HERS software, or two performance options using California Title 24 compliance software.

Partners should also note that Revision 5 of the California specifications jumped up from Revision #1. This jump in the revision number was implemented to align the rev # with the national program specifications, which are currently at Revision #5. Also, while homes permitted after August 10, 2015 must follow the Rev.05 specs for California, builders may utilize aspects of these specifications – such as the ability to utilize a High Performance Attic design – immediately. Finally, consistent with the national specifications Rev05 for California establishes the solar hot water-ready provisions as encouraged, rather than a mandatory specification.

DOE Housing Innovation Awards: Lasting Legacies

DOE's [Housing Innovation Awards](#) recognize builders who have transformed the way we build high performance homes today. The Zero Energy Ready Home program exists as a result of a long legacy of programs including Building America and ENERGY STAR. But, these programs would be ineffective if there were no builders willing to implement them in the field.

This award recognizes the builders who have left a legacy – who have transformed our vision as well as the way we build and sell high performance homes. They are the people who through hard work and dedication have made it possible to have the home of the future here today.

Last year we recognized Jerry Wade. Jerry moved to New Mexico from Mississippi in 1950s. In response to his own financial struggles, he decided to provide decent housing for low-income homeowners. During the 1960s, Jerry and his father built homes together in New Mexico and Colorado. Jerry started the brand Artistic Homes in 1986, with a focus on entry-level homes. Artistic was one of the first production builders to meet ENERGY STAR requirements in New Mexico.

In 1998, during the early days of Building America, Betsy Petit with Building Science Corporation went to Artistic Homes looking for early adopters to partner with the program. Jerry was in because he understood that his low-income buyers had the most to gain from effectively integrating high performance.

Jerry Wade's legacy is apparent today. His son Tom Wade operates Palo Duro Homes, which has consistently delivered large numbers of homes certified to the Zero Energy Ready Home program.

Who is your legacy builder?

Who should be recognized with a DOE Housing Innovation Award for transforming the way we build high performance homes today? Share your thoughts.

Who is eligible? Any builder of new homes in the U.S. (does not have to be alive or still building)

What are the criteria for a lasting legacy? The ZERH team will review the nominations with the following in mind:

- Has the builder contributed unique value-added innovation to the industry, (e.g., the first to provide energy warranties, the first to incorporate ENERGY STAR guidelines, most incorporation of Building America technologies, etc.)?
- Has the builder achieved a major technical accomplishment that contributed to moving the industry a significant jump forward in high performance?
- Is the builder a compelling ambassador for high performance homes?
- Is there significant empirical evidence for their high performance business case?

Let us know who you think should be recognized as a legacy builder and how they have transformed the high performance home industry. Send an email to zero@newportpartnersllc.com by July 17, 2015, with "Legacy Award" in the subject line. Don't wait, send it now and include: who you are nominating and why they should be recognized for their lasting legacy.

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