

dutchess at home

by Kate Goldsmith



Maximizing energy usage

Energy costs are a major item in any homeowner's budget, but with the escalating price of energy it has become critical to examine current usage and look for ways to reduce consumption.

Whether your home is brand new or 100 years old, it can become a leaner, meaner energy-saving machine. According to Joseph Malcarne, founder of Malcarne Contracting Inc. in Staatsburg, a smart way to start is with a comprehensive home assessment done by a qualified professional.

"The reason I recommend this as a first step is because this gives you a good springboard," he says.

He suggests hiring someone who has received training through the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA), a government research organization created in 1975. Visit getenergysmart.org for a list of contractors in the Mid-Hudson region.

According to Malcarne, the evaluation costs between \$250 and \$1,000 but most commonly costs about \$500.

"It's not just an energy audit," he adds. The assessment looks at the whole home, inside (appliances, furnace, hot water heater, light bulbs, pressure and thermal boundaries, or "envelope") and outside (slope and drainage of property, safety hazards, indications of mold).

Once the evaluation is done, a report is generated with a list of suggested actions and projected



Joseph Malcarne, founder of Malcarne Contracting Inc. *Photo submitted.*



Photo courtesy Metro Creative Graphics.

pricing. Malcarne stresses the importance of finding a competent and trustworthy contractor who is working with the latest energy-saving techniques.

"People are the greatest resource; find people who are passionate about what they do," he says.

While homeowners should leave the major projects to the pros, Malcarne says there are simple steps they can take on their own to reduce energy use, such as switching from incandescent light bulbs to compact fluorescent bulbs and weather-stripping around doors and windows. If you can see light coming in through these openings in your home, you can be assured that energy is draining out. There is also a product called an attic tent that is placed over attic stairs to prevent drafts.

Visit getenergysmart.org and go to Resources, then Energy Saving Tips, for more information on the ways, big and small, you can do your part to reduce energy consumption and save yourself some money, too.



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