



Organizing a Home Energy Party

Home energy parties can be an effective way to encourage residents to improve the efficiency of their homes. Based upon the Tupperware party model, homeowners who have recently completed comprehensive energy retrofits invite their neighbors and friends to their homes to share their experiences. The energy contractor who performed the work is also invited to attend and explain the energy audit and retrofit process. A home energy party is an easy, fun way for individuals that have completed energy improvements to share their experience, tips, and knowledge with the community. By opening their homes and sharing the steps they've taken, community members can get first-hand testimonials about saving energy and money through home efficiency improvements.

Steps in Organizing a Home Energy Party

Below are some of the key steps and options for organizing a home energy party:

1. **Identify a home that has completed comprehensive energy efficiency retrofits:** If you are unaware of individuals that have completed comprehensive energy efficiency improvements under the Home Performance with ENERGY STAR® program or VT Gas Systems program, Efficiency Vermont can help you find individual(s) in your community who might be interested in sharing their experiences and opening up their home to friends and neighbors. Contact Kathleen Brown at Efficiency Vermont at kbrown@veic.org or 888-921-5990 ext 7740 to start the process.
2. **Arrange for Home Performance with ENERGY STAR contractor to attend:** After you have identified a homeowner who is willing to open up their home for a home energy party, ask a certified Home Performance with ENERGY STAR contractor come to attend. Ideally, the contractor who completed work on the home should be the one to attend the party as they will be familiar with the home and the energy improvements that were made. There is also a comfort/trust level that comes with having the same person who did the work involved with the party. The contractor can explain what work was done, conduct a blower door test, discuss what is involved in conducting an energy audit and retrofit, and answer questions. If the contractor who performed the audit on your home isn't available, Efficiency Vermont can help you identify a contractor in your area.
3. **Invite friends and neighbors:** We suggest asking the individual hosting the home energy party to identify neighbors and friends to invite. In addition, you can form an "invitation committee" to put together an invitation list of friends, colleagues, and neighbors to invite. In addition, you can open up the party to the broader community. Be sure the host is comfortable with the decision to cast the invitation net far and wide. Consider holding the event on a weekday evening or weekend day, and be sure to allow for up to two hours.
4. **Arrange the agenda:** Some activities to do at the home energy party include:

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- **Start with a short presentation:** It will be important to cover the following points during an introductory overview to attendees:
 - **Motivation for work:** The homeowner can share what motivated them to move forward with home efficiency improvements; e.g. drafty house, high energy bills, ice dams, comfort, etc.
 - **Opportunities for energy savings:** The energy contractor can review the results of the energy audit report and some of the basic energy saving opportunities that were identified.
 - **Work completed:** The contractor can review what work was done and any special circumstances that arose.
 - **Results:** The homeowner can talk about the cost and energy savings realized and any other benefits that have results from the improvements.
- **Give a tour:** Organize a short tour of the house so that people can see the physical work that was completed, such as spray foam in the basement or blown-in cellulose insulation in the attic.
- **Give a demonstration of a blower door test:** Ask the contractor to give a short demonstration of a blower door test and how it helps identify energy saving opportunities.
- **Have an information sharing session:** Whether it is unplugging your cell phone charger, buying a CFL, or getting a comprehensive energy retrofit, consider offering some time where attendees can share ways they are saving energy.
- **Allow time for individual questions and answers:** Many individuals will probably have specific questions to ask the contractor. Be sure to allow ample time at the end.
- **Show a video:** Efficiency Vermont has a 10-minute video that you can show at the house party, “What to Expect from Your Energy Audit and Home Improvements,” that shows what is involved in professional energy audit under the Home Performance with ENERGY STAR program.

Tips for Organizing a Home Energy Party

There are a number of tricks to get people out of their houses and into yours by:

- **Fun:** The key to successful education is entertainment. Whatever you do – don’t call your event a meeting. Call it a gathering or party. Hold contests, quizzes, icebreakers.
- **Familiarity:** People are more likely to attend if they know the inviters. Get together with three to five other friends and put together an invitation list of friends, colleagues, and neighbors. Put the names of those doing the inviting on the invitation itself.
- **Food:** Food is always a sure winner. Schedule your event after dinner and call it an “ice cream and pie social.” Or hold it on a Sunday morning and make it a potluck brunch.

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- ***Guarantee a new energy saving tip:*** Guarantee that everyone will learn at least one new way to save energy if they attend your event. And saving energy means saving money. At the end of the event, take a poll and ask folks what the most valuable idea/tip that everyone learned. This go-round will help reinforce what folks learned at the event and what actions they plan to undertake.
- ***Plan activities for children:*** Many of your invitees will undoubtedly have young children. Consider having a childcare provider and some energy-related activities for children at your event. Contact the Energy Information Agency at the U.S. Department of Energy at www.eia.doe.gov/kids/ for ideas on energy-related activities for children.
- ***Promote the Party:*** Promote your house party using a combination of the tips provided above – incorporating the idea of fun, learning, door prizes, and food. Also, consider use a variety of social network tools – such as Facebook and Twitter – to help spread the word.