Get Three Times the Pay Back for Replacing Old Windows

by (ARA)

Many factors have converged to make 2006 a great time for home remodeling. Projects completed this fall will increase a home's curb appeal, make it more energy efficient and reduce the homeowner's tax burden. Escalating natural gas and fuel oil prices mean that energy-conscious home updates can result in worthwhile savings. Residential heating oil costs increased 32.7 percent in 2004 and 8.3 percent in 2005. Natural gas costs nearly doubled from 1995 to 2005, according to the Energy Information Administration. With the median age of U.S. homes at 34, owners of homes with original and outdated appliances, furnaces, air conditioners, and windows are really feeling the pain of increased energy costs. The typical household could save up to 30 percent of its annual energy costs by using Energy Star-rated products, according to Energystar.gov. "Windows and entry doors have progressed considerably in terms of energy efficiency and design in the last 10 years," said Jeff Kibler, brand manager for Peachtree Doors & Windows, a manufacturer of windows, patio doors and entry doors. "Just like a new car looks and runs better than an older model, windows and doors can update a home's appearance and energy performance relatively quickly. And the updates to an average home won't cost as much as a new car."The federal government has further sweetened the pie with tax breaks for homeowners who install new energy-efficient windows, doors, skylights, furnaces, insulation and central air conditioners. Homeowners can receive tax credits equal to 10 percent of the improvement costs, up to a certain dollar limit, for improvements made in 2006 and 2007. Credits of $200 are available on new windows, skylights and storm windows; and there's a $500 maximum credit for exterior doors.Updating windows and doors can increase a home's value while adding curb appeal, both of which are helpful to homeowners readying a house for sale in a competitive marketplace. According to "Building Products" magazine, homeowners are able to recoup an average of 88 percent of their investment in new windows when they sell their home. Homeowners in the West recoup, on average, 102.7 percent of the cost of window replacement upon a sale.Identifying Energy Efficient Windows, DoorsSeveral factors make windows, patio doors and entry doors more energy efficient. The composition of the window or door is a major factor. All-aluminum windows will be the least energy efficient, whereas vinyl, wood and clad windows will be the most efficient. Vinyl windows with multiple hollow chambers within the frame will perform better than vinyl windows without the chambers, which insulate against heat and cold loss. The best performing windows have two or three panes of glass, with the airspace in between the panes acting as insulation. Manufacturers also can add special coatings or fill the airspace with a harmless gas such argon or krypton to improve the buffering ability. Fiberglass and steel entry doors, which typically have a dense inner core, will be more efficient than solid wood doors. Peachtree boasts fiberglass and steel entry doors that insulate up to six times better than wood. Keep in mind that the less glass there is in an entry door, the more efficient it will be. An added benefit of fiberglass and steel doors is that they resist dings and won't rot, warp or split.Entry door frames can be a source of air and water leaks. Homeowners should make sure the frame's seams are tight and the frame is level. Peachtree offers a unique single frame encasing its entry door panels and sidelites, in order to reduce air infiltration at the seams. Windows and doors can be manufactured to Energy Star specifications for four climate zones, which signify greater energy efficiency. A low U value and a high R value also signify windows with greater thermal performance. There are many products available for homeowners to update their windows with more efficient choices. The products range from full replacement windows to pocket windows, and sash replacement kits for single and double hung windows. Full replacement windows are typically available in custom sizes to accommodate existing openings. New construction windows can also be adapted for retrofit applications. Regardless of the options chosen, new windows and doors will pay off in reduced energy costs, tax breaks and increased home values. For more information on the Federal tax credits, visit www.energystar.gov/taxcredits. For more information on windows and entry doors, visit www.peachtreedoor.com.