

Comments Received Via E-mail From Robby Schwarz, BuiltWright, Inc.

The following are some comments on the 2006 Energy Star Specs:

1. I believe the duct leakage guideline should be a total leakage not a leakage to outside number. It is much more practical to test a duct system at its rough stage prior to drywall when it can actually be fixed. If the duct system is tight from a total duct leakage perspective then it will also be tight from a leakage to the outside perspective.
2. I believe that the window requirement when the window to floor area is above 21% could be a very difficult aspect of the new standards for all builders. On the production side we most often see a 0.35 u-value window which would mean at 21% WFA the window would have to come down to 0.30. I do not believe that the builder will be willing to do this and may drop out of the program. For custom builder who we see most often using wood clad windows with u-values in the 0.37 range, I believe the same could be true. It is difficult to get a wood clad window with a low U-value without spending money that I don't see the builder willing to spend.
3. Thermal Bypass inspection: #2 it is unclear where the air barrier should be installed at the edge of the insulation. Is this the perimeter of the garage floor and the floor system to the house? #12 whole house fans covers that are gasketed on the house side should be considered as well. The tamarac fan is the only one that would work as it is written unless you want people climbing in the attic to install a cover. We prefer to recommend an cover that can be installed on the house side of the fan.
4. Sampling: Many of the test will need to be completed at the rough stages of construction. If we are only testing one in seven houses it is likely the builder will know which house we are testing and that things may be look after more diligently than the other 6 houses in the batch. The idea that Darren Washak in Arizona is using is to test three houses in the batch of seven. Each house at a different stage so as to get a better sample of what is really happening. So one house may have the rough duct blast. The second house may have the insulation and thermal bypass inspection, and the third house may have the final blower door test and energy rating. This would seem to be a better way to structure the sampling protocol. I do think it is much more difficult to manage but that it would insure better results.

Thanks!