

Comments Via E-mail From Blake Peden, Goodman Family of Builders

I attended a seminar where I learned a few things about the 2006 Energy Star program. Most of the proposal items are pretty self explanatory. The main problem that I have is the timing. As proactive as we all want to be, there are only a few things that we can do now, to prepare us for this transition.

The HVAC manufacturers are working on their 13 and 14 SEER product, and have yet to release 2006 costs to anybody (that I am aware of). This makes it difficult to look at hard costs.

The rating software is also not ready and will have to be tested. After we rate our product, we may have to throw other things, such as R-38 blown ceilings, or better windows into the mix. These have costs, obviously.

And the local incentive plan will not be released for another couple of months. Again – the “cost” to the builder for bumping up to an Energy Star home must be evaluated.

And the date of implementation is critical. It was discussed that all closings July 1, 2006, would need to meet the new criteria. We are close to permitting some homes this fall that may close after this date. Basing certification on a close date rather than a permit date is a moving target. Some houses build faster than others. Some houses do not sell for awhile and could be placed on hold.

The fact that the timeline to crunch cost data and to evaluate the new program is so tight is a real fear to me.

We truly want to continue to build Energy Star homes, as we feel it is a better product for the customer, and it adds value and better customer satisfaction. But we have to do our behind the scenes legwork.