

Coastal Plain Area Weatherization Program Saves Homeowners Money



An estimated 19 percent of a household's total annual income is spent on energy bills (electric and gas). Helping low-income senior citizens reduce their energy costs is the focus of Coastal Plain Area E.O.A.'s Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP).

Managed by the Georgia Environmental Finance Authority (GEFA), the WAP is part of a national program administered by the U.S. Department of Energy. GEFA contracts with community action agencies (including Coastal Plain Area E.O.A.), local governments, and non-profit organizations to provide weatherization services in Georgia's 159 counties.

Coastal Plain Area E.O.A. was recently recognized by GEFA for "meeting or exceeding the standard of work" performed within homes as part of the WAP. Coastal Plain E.O.A. covers a 10-county service area: Ben Hill, Berrien, Brooks, Cook, Echols, Irwin, Lanier, Lowndes, Tift, and Turner.

"Weatherization is about reducing the energy costs to the home by making it more energy efficient and ensure the health and safety of household occupants, said John Tyno, director of Coastal Plain E.O.A. Weatherization Assistance Program. "The audit involves a series of diagnostic tests and evaluations that help determine the need for energy-saving measures, these measures are prioritized by WAP."

Tyno further explains that during the audit, the homeowner is instructed on ways they can reduce their energy costs, as well as health and safety concerns the home may have.

"One of our priority measures is air-sealing, this is done by sealing up air leakage in the house through holes and cracks in the floors, walls, and ceilings," Tyno said. "This helps keep conditioned air from escaping and unwanted outside air from entering the house putting an extra burden on the home's heating and cooling system."

Tyno said health and safety concerns are also identified in the home audit.

"If they do not have smoke and carbon monoxide detectors then those are installed," he said. "Even if they don't have gas appliances, carbon monoxide can come from your car or generators. We make sure they have both detectors and that they are hard-wired with backup batteries."

WAP funding covers prioritized measures that include attic insulation, moisture exhaust fans, smoke and carbon monoxide detectors, general waste heat protection and energy efficient light bulb replacement.

Tyno said that a 60 to 90-day follow-up with the homeowner is performed to determine the level of savings.

“We see on average a 30 percent savings,” he said. “In some cases the savings is higher, we have had as much as 50 to 60 percent in savings. Our homeowners feel a difference immediately.”

For more information on the Coastal Plain Area EOA Weatherization Assistance Program, visit the website at <http://www.coastalplain.org/weatherization/> or call 229-244-7860.