



## **ENERGY FOCUS**

### **Survive the Energy Crisis**

**By Mike Musick, Cold Climate Housing Research Center**

“Survive the Energy Crisis by Weatherizing, Retrofitting, and Green Building” was the title of a 45 minute seminar at the Interior Alaska Building Association Home Show that I recently co-presented with Jim Lee, Executive Director of Interior Weatherization Inc. The Carlson Center staff did a great job setting up more chairs as the people kept flowing through the double doors like migrating caribou. There is no doubt that the high cost of energy has gotten the attention of home owners in our community. Everybody wants to know what they can do to conserve energy in their homes while at the same time maintaining good indoor air quality in a safe, comfortable, durable, and affordable home.

To meet this challenge many of us in the building and energy professions have been working hard at finding solutions for Alaskans. On one side of these efforts are new training programs for builders and others in the construction industry. The Cold Climate Housing Research Center in cooperation with the Alaska Works Partnership (AWP) recently co-sponsored a week-long training session for builders, mechanical contractors and home owners in the art and science of weatherizing existing homes in Alaska. The intent is to develop a statewide Weatherization (Wx) curriculum for the Six Construction Academies around the Alaska sponsored by the Alaska Works Partnership.

On the other side are new options to help reduce the cost of heating homes. The State Legislature recently passed new weatherization and energy rebate legislation, appropriating \$200 million for weatherization and \$100 million for energy rebates. Alaskans will be able to participate in either the weatherization program or the rebate program but not both.

Alaskans who meet income requirements will be eligible for free weatherization. Current regulations cap the Low Income Weatherization Grant Program at 60% of median income levels. New legislation is pending to increase income limits to 100% of the median income levels that range from just under \$40,000 for a one person household to almost \$120,000 for a family of 14. Under the proposed new regulations a family of 4 that made under \$76,560 would qualify for the free weatherization program. In Fairbanks, call the Interior Weatherization Inc. at 452-5323 to see if you qualify. Or email [jwi@alaska.com](mailto:jwi@alaska.com).

All Alaskans who do not qualify for the weatherization program will be eligible for the energy rebate program. For both the weatherization program and the home energy rebate program, energy audits are required. The energy auditor will inspect each home, assess potential energy savings, perform a blower door test, and enter all pertinent data into the

Akwarm computer program to generate a list of priority measures for conserving energy in the home. This will result in an energy rating for a home. Each home in the rebate program must have pre and post energy ratings. The amount of the rebate will depend on how much the energy efficiency of the home improves—the more a home improves on the energy rating the greater the cash rebate.

The Board of Directors of AHFC met on April 30 to define the interim regulations governing these programs and more detailed information will be available soon. The new regulations will be available for public comment for 120 days. In the meantime, the new interim regulations go into effect immediately following the Board's action. Contact AHFC at 1-800-478-2432 or go to [www.ahfc.state.ak.us/energy/weatherization\\_rebates.cfm](http://www.ahfc.state.ak.us/energy/weatherization_rebates.cfm) for the latest information on the Weatherization and Rebate Programs.

**This week's Energy Focus article is brought to you in cooperation with the Cold Climate Housing Research Center and Focus Fairbanks. Visit [www.cchrc.org](http://www.cchrc.org) or call us at 457-3454 for more on cold climate construction and energy efficiency.**