

## News

# East County Gears Up for the Growing Green Home Upgrade Industry

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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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Pittsburg, Calif. 12/17/2010 – Nine East Contra Costa County contractors attended a week-long intensive residential energy efficiency retrofit training at Pittsburg Adult Education Center in November. This was the first of three planned opportunities for local contractors to take the course, which prepares them to conduct energy performance assessments and improve home energy systems by 20 – 40%. Because energy conservation helps the environment, these contractors are joining a growing “green” industry. The course covers the Building Performance Institute’s (BPI) Building Analyst and Building Envelope Specialist curriculum and culminates in the associated certification exams.

The BPI course offerings are the result of months of collaboration between many agencies in Contra Costa County and were timed to start before anticipated growth of the “green” home energy upgrade sector in East County. Contra Costa County will be receiving State Energy Program funding to support residential energy assessments and upgrades. This rebate program, along with similar programs from PG&E, will be offered in early 2011 under the umbrella of “Energy Upgrade California”, and is anticipated to create steady work for building performance contractors.

The Workforce Development Board of Contra Costa County is subsidizing nearly the entire cost of the three series of BPI course offerings to make it affordable for local contractors that have been impacted by the economic downturn. Additionally, it is leveraging the resources of the Contra Costa Small Business Development Center (SBDC) to supplement this training by offering one-on-one advising for the graduates of this course to market their new skills and certifications. Pittsburg Adult Education Center is offering their facilities to support this effort. The local cities have supported outreach to their contractors by compiling mailing lists and publicizing the courses locally.

The students also recognize this as an opportunity to gain the skills they need to compete for jobs in a continuously changing industry. When introducing themselves and their interest in the field, many echoed the observation that “green” is the next wave in building construction and renovation. Among green building features, energy efficiency is one of the most important. “Energy efficiency is an important first step before going solar,” explained Jeff Nichols of Ideal Solar in Brentwood. “It’s more cost effective, and increases comfort in the home.” The students, ranging in field and level of experience from new general contractors to experienced energy performance professionals, expressed their enthusiasm and praise for the course. “[The instructor] is top notch. He keeps it moving, he knows what he’s doing, and he has field experience,” said Bill Stewart of Stewart Heating and Air in Pittsburg, which has been conducting energy assessments since the 1990s.

The goal of building performance is to improve not only energy efficiency but indoor air quality and comfort. Assessing the house as a system addresses common ailments such as leaky attics, mold, and carbon monoxide pollution. “We want our residents to have healthy homes, and our contractors to have work,” explains Laura Wright, Administrative Officer at the City of Pittsburg. “These reasons are what drove us to bring the Energy Upgrade California program and Building Performance Institute to the Workforce Development Board’s attention. We believe it will be a great investment in the community.” The City of Pittsburg and the Pittsburg Arts and Community Foundation have been tracking developments in this industry since early 2010, and have been actively pursuing BPI training in East County and outreach to local contractors.

The BPI training is being taught by ConSol, long time energy consultants and an official BPI Affiliate organization, and will be offered at two more sessions at the Pittsburg Adult Education Center. East County contractors are eligible for the discounted tuition rate, and should contact the City of Pittsburg at 925-252-4129 or visit [www.ci.pittsburg.ca.us/energyupgrade](http://www.ci.pittsburg.ca.us/energyupgrade) for more information.

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