

Promoting Independence in Rhode Island

As the first colony to declare independence from England, Rhode Island planted the seeds for this nation to blossom into a flourishing democracy. Today, Rhode Island partners with the U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE) Weatherization Assistance Program (Weatherization) to promote energy efficiency and help low-income families become more self-sufficient. Weatherization reduces energy costs for low-income families by improving the energy efficiency of their homes, while ensuring their health and safety.

A HELPING HAND UP

Weatherization alleviates the disproportionate energy burden experienced by low-income households, who spend 14% of their total income on energy, compared with 3.5% for other households. After a home is weatherized, low-income families typically experience a 25-30% reduction on their energy bill. Anthony Saw*, an 86-year-old client from Cranston, had trouble paying his heating bill. He was attracted to weatherization because it provided a long-term solution to his energy problems and kept his financial independence intact. Anthony remarked, "I'm like my dad. First, I'll eat every stone on the sidewalk, then I'll ask for assistance."

ADVANCING ENERGY EFFICIENCY

When Rhode Island's program began in 1977, temporary measures, like covering windows with plastic, were emphasized. Since then, Weatherization has integrated advanced technology and expanded its reach to become the nation's core program for delivering residential energy efficiency services. The Rhode Island State Energy Office administers the program and six community action agencies deliver weatherization services to eligible residents. Rhode Island leverages core DOE funding to secure additional dollars from the state and utilities. In 1999, Rhode Island leveraged \$3 million to weatherize 368 homes, in addition to 241 homes with DOE funds.

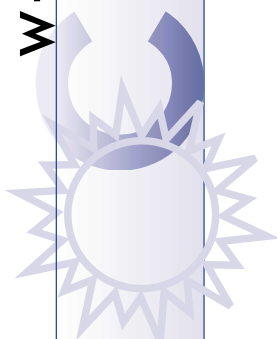
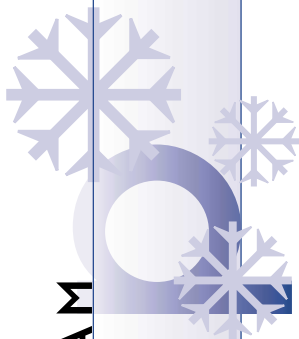
NATIONAL WEATHERIZATION PROGRAM

Homes weatherized in 1999	68,000
DOE allocations in 1999	\$135 million
Average annual energy cost savings per household	\$300
Average space heating savings	25-30%
Energy benefits returned for every \$1 invested	\$2.10
Jobs supported	7,000

RHODE ISLAND

Homes weatherized in 1999 (with DOE \$)	241
DOE funding in 1999	\$677,928
Clients served in 1999	572
Elderly	17%
People with disabilities	11%
Families with children	47%

Weatherization technicians use a computerized energy audit to determine the most cost-effective weatherization measures to install in each home. Diagnostic tools, like the blower door, are used to detect air leaks and pressure imbalances within the home. Combustion analyzers are used to check furnace efficiency and safety. Crews also test appliances for carbon monoxide, an odorless, colorless gas, which can be deadly in large concentrations. Typical weatherization measures include blowing insulation; performing heating and cooling tune-ups and modifications; and repairing and sealing ducts.



WEATHERIZATION CREWS LEAD THE WAY

In concert with advanced technology, the success of the Weatherization Program can be credited to the skilled crews who deliver high quality services and emphasize superior customer relations. Rhode Island crews receive technical training at national conferences, regional training centers, and in the field. The professional courtesy that crew members extend to the client is valued almost as much as the measures they install.

Susan Paul*, a client from Warwick, was embarrassed that her family needed assistance. As part of the working poor, she was disqualified from several government programs. But Weatherization was able to provide a solution to her energy needs. The courtesy and respect that Susan received from the Weatherization Program staff prompted her to write a letter of thanks stating, "I never felt ashamed."

FREEDOM FROM CHOICE

Every day, weatherization crews encounter homes where people are suffering. The Weatherization Director of the Comprehensive Community Action Program recalls an elderly couple who ate bread and butter for meals to save money but were still four months behind on their energy bill. Weatherization frees people from making the difficult choice between food or fuel. As U.S. Senator Jack Reed stated, "No one should find themselves in the position of having to choose between buying food for their family or paying the heating bill."

INDEPENDENCE FOR THE COMMUNITY

Weatherization directly benefits low-income families. It also creates energy, economic, and environmental benefits for the entire community. Since the program's inception, more than 25,000 Rhode Island homes have been weatherized, saving the equivalent of 52 million barrels of heating oil.

Weatherization creates job opportunities for nineteen energy professionals who operate the program and additional jobs are created for subcontractors and material suppliers. By



Weatherization crew blows insulation into the walls of a low-income home.

reducing energy bills for low-income families, money remains in the community that would typically be exported out to pay for energy. This spurs local economic growth and reduces dependence on income assistance programs.

In addition, reducing residential energy demand decreases electricity generation and avoids emissions of

nitrogen oxides, sulphur dioxide, and other pollutants. This improves local air quality and reduces adverse health effects, particularly asthma.

WEATHERIZATION WORKS!

Weatherization produces an impressive range of energy, economic, and environmental benefits for low-income households and communities. Nationally, for every \$1 invested in the program, Weatherization returns \$2.10 in energy-related benefits. Weatherization measures reduce national energy consumption and curb demand for imported oil. Most importantly, Weatherization gives clients like Anthony and Susan a warm, safe home while maintaining their self-sufficiency. Weatherization works for Rhode Island and America!

**Names have been changed to protect the privacy of the subjects.*

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE WEATHERIZATION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM, CONTACT:

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Visit the Weatherization Web site at: www.eren.doe.gov/buildings/weatherization_assistance
Or call the Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy Clearinghouse at: 1-800-DOE-3732



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