

# Build it Back Green



At both the state and federal levels, there are more programs than ever before encouraging homeowners to build and remodel with energy efficiency in mind through incentives like rebates and tax credits.

According to the U.S. Department of Energy, consumers who purchase and install specific products, such as energy-efficient windows, insulation, doors, roofs and heating and cooling equipment in existing homes can receive a tax credit for 30% of the cost, up to \$1,500, for improvements "placed in service" from Jan. 1, 2009, through Dec. 31, 2010.

Opportunities like the Louisiana Home Energy Rebate Option program give incentives to consumers who may otherwise have decided that energy-efficient upgrades to their homes could wait until next year. Each state's program is different, and none of them are simple. Many consumers are confused about where to go for resources to learn what improvements and upgrades will qualify and how to get their improvements certified.

The federal tax credit does not include water softeners, but it does include water heaters. The research released in the Battelle Study earlier this year provides proof that using a water heater with hard water dramatically decreases the appliance's efficiency by as much as 24%—making a softener (or softener upgrade) a natural next step.

Have you thoroughly researched any tax breaks or incentives in your service area? You may discover new opportunities to educate customers on options for new equipment and how to help that new equipment perform at its best, saving them the most energy and money.

Even if the residential market isn't what it used to be, this trend certainly offers new opportunities to get into homes and build connections with potential customers. Hopefully you are already well connected in the community and can position yourself as a point person for this issue. If you are just beginning to sort through the tax credits and incentives, set aside a good chunk of time and dive into the following resources:

- **The Database of State Incentives for Renewables and Efficiency (DSIRE)** ([www.dsireusa.org](http://www.dsireusa.org)) offers more details on federal, state, local and utility incentives, searchable by state.
- **The U.S. Department of Energy** ([www.energy.gov/taxbreaks.htm](http://www.energy.gov/taxbreaks.htm)) offers more information about federal home energy efficiency improvement tax credits.
- **EnergyStar.gov** ([www.energystar.gov/index.cfm?c=tax\\_credits.tx\\_index](http://www.energystar.gov/index.cfm?c=tax_credits.tx_index)) offers more information about the energy efficiency tax credits, what equipment qualifies and how to receive the credit.
- **The Water Quality Assn. and the Battelle Memorial Institute** ([www.wqa.org/battellereport](http://www.wqa.org/battellereport)) offer the full text of the Battelle Report—an independent, third-party research study that gives hard figures on energy savings provided by using a water softener.

Know the energy statistics of the equipment you sell, and have this information at the forefront of your sales and marketing material. Make sure regulators and officials developing these programs know the benefits of using a softener.

How have you taken advantage of the trend in energy efficient remodeling? Have you seen it in the commercial sector, as well? Let us know your thoughts by writing to us at [wqpeditor@sgcmail.com](mailto:wqpeditor@sgcmail.com).

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## coming up next month

The December Reference Guide issue of *Water Quality Products* will feature the 2010 State of the Industry Report, winners of the 2010 Top Projects competition, articles on various sectors of the water treatment industry and the 2010 product guide.

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