

## Existing Homes Get Certified

Southern California now has a unique energy efficiency partnership for certifying improvements in existing homes. The certification program was developed by contractor Ray Hall, who runs H&L Energy Savers in San Bernardino County, California, together with the League of California Homeowners (LCH). Hall has been a successful crusader for educating homeowners and the real estate community about the advantages, finances, and procedures for weatherizing older homes—especially through the use of energy-efficient mortgages (EEMs) (see “Contractor’s Marketing Success,” *HE* Jan/Feb ’99, p. 43). LCH, a 10,000-member organization formed in 1993, provides homeowners with a central resource of information pertaining to home remodeling, real estate transactions, and financing.

The program is called Performance 4, and its four components are the making of a cleaner, quieter, more comfortable, and more energy-efficient home. The minimum requirements for certification are:

- heating and cooling ducts to be properly wrapped and sealed (with diagnostic testing before and after to confirm target leakage reduction level);
- gas water heater with an energy factor of .6 or greater and the installation of low-flow showerheads and pipe insulation;
- attic insulation to meet or exceed R-30 standard; and
- exterior wall insulation to meet or exceed R-11 standard.

“These are the minimum requirements, but half of the homeowners don’t stop here,” Hall says. They also install one or more of the following improvements:

- high-efficiency Energy Star furnaces and air conditioners;
- programmable thermostats;
- high-performance Energy Star double-pane windows; and
- efficient fluorescent lighting.

Voucher programs offered by many

utilities cover 20% of improvements. The utilities follow up with inspections of the vouchered items.

Only a third-party organization,

for their time and effort!” Hall has seen utility bills in homes that meet Performance 4 criteria cut in half. Since the program’s inception, 45 houses have been certified. Hall’s target is 150 houses by the end of the year. Nearly three-quarters of the houses with EEMs that Hall is working on are opting for Performance 4 certification.

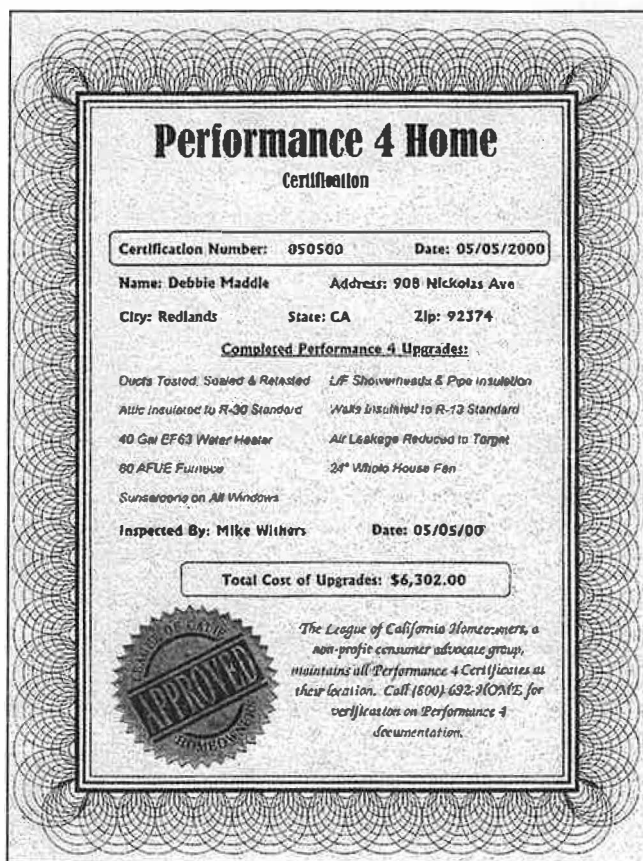
The certification program has grabbed the attention of the Southern California Gas Company, which is now helping to bring the program’s existence to the attention of many others. The utility awarded H&L Energy a \$200,000 grant to publicize and expand the program. Lance DeLaura, project manager for the utility and a member of the committee that selected Hall’s proposal, said that the program is “expanding the knowledge and, in fact, creating additional funding of EEMs—which are still really in their infancy—while installing concrete energy efficiency measures in many homes.”

One of the publicity outreach mechanisms funded by the Southern California Gas Company grant is a new

Web site featuring many explanatory photographs at [www.performance4.com](http://www.performance4.com). The grant has also covered focus groups and instruction materials.

—Doug Peckler

*Doug Peckler is associate editor of Home Energy.*



Performance 4 certificates assure appraisers, lenders, real estate agents, and home buyers of basic energy efficiency and comfort standards.

such as the League of California Homeowners, can provide the certification. Each Performance 4 homeowner receives a numbered certificate, with a copy held on file by the league. In this way, appraisers, lenders, and real estate agents can all readily identify houses that have been improved.

The minimum improvements for certification cost about \$3,200 (see box) in Southern California for a 1,500 ft<sup>2</sup> home, according to Hall. “The program guides people to do the most effective improvements first,” he says. “The idea of certification is really catching on, in large part because it maximizes results while minimizing costs. Not to mention that people like the idea of getting an energy diploma

LEAGUE OF CALIFORNIA HOMEOWNERS

### Sample costs:

Here’s how the \$3,200 cost for certifying a 1,500-sq. foot home breaks down:

- Attic and wall insulation: \$1,800
- Duct testing and sealing: \$750
- Gas water heater, pipe insulation, and low-flow showerhead: \$650