



*Tribune photo by JULIE BUSCH*

Rob Kaiser cleans the floor of a home that was sprayed with Icynene Spray Foam Insulation at a home being built on Swann Avenue.

## Spray-on foam cools attic, cuts power bill

By LEIGH SPANN

*The Tampa Tribune* (TBO.com)

Published: August 27, 2009

Updated: 08/28/2009 06:44 pm

An alternative insulation for attics is growing in popularity with its promise to lower electric bills by up to 50 percent.

Instead of the standard fiberglass insulation above the ceiling, spray-in foam insulation is sprayed on the underside of the roof. It goes on like paint, and in seconds swells 100 times its size to form a barrier in the rafters.

"The thing about foams is they're an air barrier, and they're insulation all in one," says Tom Daniel of Daniel Insulation in Clearwater. When the spray-in foam is installed, the old insulation on the ceiling is removed. This allows air to circulate through the ceiling and into the attic.

With the barrier in place under the roof, the attic becomes included in the cooling process rather than a 140-degree cloud of hot, humid air, as Daniel describes it. When a home's cooling system doesn't have to compensate for that hot air, energy use is lowered by up to half, he says.

"The first thought people have is that if I'm heating and cooling my attic, it's got to be more on my electric bill. It's actually less," he says.

Here's why: Air that escapes through ventilation systems must be replaced. For every cubic foot of air that leaves, one must come in. "It comes leaking in through that hot, humid attic."

This eco-friendly insulation doesn't come cheap. For the average home, fiberglass insulation costs about \$1,100 installed. For the same home, spray-in foam will cost \$4,100. Add another \$1,250 if the existing insulation must be removed.

But it's a good investment, Daniel says.

"If you're going to stay in the house a few years, it's going to pay for itself." Plus, in the tough housing market, it can be a selling feature.

To help, some energy companies offer a rebate for improvements such as spray insulation. Tampa Electric offers up to \$200 for upgrading ceiling insulation, though it's not specifically for spray-in foam.

Progress Energy offers a \$100 rebate for foam, spokeswoman Cherie Jacobs says.

"For folks who are interested in helping improve the planet, that's a philosophical decision for them, and the rebate helps that decision on the financial side," she says.

And the savings could get bigger.

"The spray-in foam insulation rebate is something that we will definitely review," she says.

The 2009 federal stimulus plan provides for a 30 percent tax credit (a reduction of taxes - not a tax deduction) up to \$1,500, for upgrading insulation.

Reporter Leigh Spann can be reached at (813) 221-5772 or [lspann@wfla.com](mailto:lspann@wfla.com).