
Department of Energy

In Alaska, Weatherization Training Goes Home ...(sort of)

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Of all the plans [the Tlingit-Haida Regional Housing Authority](#) has to improve its weatherization training program, Craig Moore is most excited about acquiring a house -- a test house.

The reason? Training in a private residence has its limitations. And what Moore and the Authority will get is a fully functional home that students can measure and analyze just as they would in real life.

"This is something we do not have yet and we desperately need it," he says. "Before, we always had to ... check around to see if anyone had a house they would allow us to use. Sometimes we had a challenging time finding a house that was really suitable, [and] it wasn't always a home that gave us all the things we needed to train the crews properly."

That need is being met through a grant of approximately \$960,000 from the U.S. Department of Energy. The funding, which comes through the [American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009](#), will establish a weatherization training center in Juneau, including the test house and separate classrooms. It will also fund weatherization

training for 50, an additional 25-paid apprenticeships and a minimum of 20 weatherization jobs. Those workers will weatherize 300-400 low-income homes in southeast Alaska.

The grant was actually awarded to the [Tlingit-Haida Central Council](#), a tribal government representing more than 24,000 Tlingit and Haida Native Alaskans. The Central Council is drawing on the housing authority's existing weatherization program, funded by the state, to build its program. That program will be open to anyone in the region who wants to learn weatherization skills, not just tribe members.

Moore says the 45 or more jobs created will be welcome. Most of the work in southeast Alaska is seasonal, in fishing, tourism or timber; the area is also suffering from the economic downturn. Weatherization can supplement seasonal income or become a full-time job.

"The weatherization jobs are considered desirable," he says. "They pay a good wage, they're a little more consistent [and] they can go through the winter."

And for some past students, he notes, the training was a stepping-stone to starting their own small contracting businesses, doing the same work independently.

The low-income people whose homes are weatherized benefit as well. Southeast Alaska is a series of islands, and settlements often are not connected by roads. Residents burn oil for heat and electricity, which can be expensive because the oil must be shipped by boat or airplane.

Statewide, weatherization reduces energy use by an average of 30 percent. With an average use of 1,000 gallons of heating oil per household annually, that could save 300 gallons of oil and \$1,050 a year (with heating oil at \$3.50/gallon).

"We are excited about being able to finally offer the training facility we need in our region," Moore says. "This is a huge help, and we're really looking forward to making it successful."

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