

Frequently Asked Questions for “Independent” HERS Raters: Rater Certification and Building a Business

NEHERS Providers Working with Independent Raters in the Northeast:

Building Performance Contractors Assoc. (BPCA)
Bridgehampton, NY

www.home-performance.org

Frazer Dougherty, HERS Manager

fdougher@optonline.net / 631.537.1654

Performance Systems Development, Inc.
Ithaca, NY

www.psdconsulting.com

New England contact: Jeffrey Rhodin

jrhodin@seanalytics.us.com / 781.704.4789

General contact: Meredith Cummings

mcummings@psdconsulting.com / 607.277.6240

EAM Associates, Inc.

Wall, NJ

www.eamenergy.com

Meridith Shields

mshields@eamenergy.com / 732.556.9190

Energy Raters of Massachusetts, Inc.

Amesbury, MA

<http://energyratersma.com>

Contact: Mike Browne / 978-270-3911

mike@advancedbuildinganalysis.com

Other Providers for Independents:

Energy & Environmental Ratings Alliance
Manhattan, KS

www.ratingsalliance.org

kbsi@flinthills.com / 785.537.2425

Guaranteed Watt Saver (GWS)

Oklahoma City, OK

www.qwssi.com

Kelly Parker, P.E.

kellypar@qwssi.com 405.946.0206

CGE Solutions, Inc

Chantilly, VA

www.cgesolutions.com

Lee O'Neil

loneal@cgesolutions.com / 703.574.4365

What business types or niches are appropriate for raters?

Even before you take your training, do you have a plan for marketing your services in the existing or new home market? In a few states, utility-sponsored ENERGY STAR new construction programs may allow participation by independent raters. In other areas, utilities contract for one or more program years directly with specific HERS providers to deliver ENERGY STAR ratings of new homes. In these states, opportunities for independent raters are more likely found in the existing home market.



Many HERS raters today are also becoming BPI certified until and if the two certifications merge (www.bpi.org). Some utilities require BPI certification for preferred providers, so it would be wise to explore your state's programs and possible licensing requirements.

To be successful you may want to market your services through a variety of avenues. When you become certified and if you join the NE HERS Alliance, your name will be listed on our website www.energyratings.org. Our certified rater members are eligible to earn continuing education credits through our monthly calls.

What equipment will I need to perform ratings?

Independent raters will need access to blower door equipment and a duct blaster, and some use infrared cameras, but they are not required. Equipment Information: www.energyconservatory.com.

How does an independent rater meet RESNET's quality assurance standard?

Provisionary raters must go through the certification process with an accredited provider, and following certification must work for, as, or with a provider such as those listed at the left.¹ You are also welcome to contact any other providers accredited in your state that are listed on RESNET's website: www.resnet.us.

If you are serious about entering the rating field, we recommend knowing what kind of rating business you are planning and engaging in a relationship with a provider even before attending a training.

What will these rating providers want to know about me when I contact them?

Before contacting providers to find your match, be prepared to discuss what kind of a business structure you are planning. You will want to inquire about: a) how many ratings they review for your certification, and what kind of homes they would like to see you rate; b) the cost for overseeing ratings and guiding you through the certification process; c) whether the company is willing to provide oversight of your ratings as your HERS Provider; and d) any ongoing fees they might charge per-rating or for quality assurance oversight.

¹ Although NE HERS Alliance members include rating providers, the organization does not perform ratings or serve as a rating provider.

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What is the process for a provisional rater to earn their certification?

At the end of the training you can continue to use a non-printing version of HERS software received in class for a period of 30 days before it expires. Because of this expiration and to keep the knowledge fresh, before the 30 days is over it would be wise to make arrangements with a HERS provider for your certification and to begin using a copy of their software that allows printable rating reports. The provider's Quality Assurance Designee may want to see ratings from a variety of homes - new, ranch, colonial, contemporary, duplex, etc., and perhaps from both construction drawings and/or from site evaluation. You will likely be asked to demonstrate that you have worked with an assortment of diagnostic needs - basements, crawl spaces, attics, slab construction, etc.

How many provisionary ratings are required to become certified?

Technically, a minimum of 5 ratings must be reviewed for certification. Two of these must be reviewed by a certified trainer, which is most easily accomplished during our rater training class. Then after that, your provider's Quality Assurance Designee will ask to review a minimum of three ratings, but more if necessary to ensure satisfactory rater understanding of the standards.

What are the differences between an energy auditor and a HERS Rater?

The term "energy auditor" is very broad, and is usually used in conjunction with a state audit program. Standards for energy auditors (training, type of audit given) vary, while HERS raters are uniformly certified across the US and require quality assurance oversight through an accredited provider. Many programs require a HERS rating, specifically, such as ENERGY STAR Homes certification and Energy Efficient Mortgages; also - some state codes will be requiring HERS ratings.

What are the differences between BPI training and HERS Rater training?

The degree of training overlap is fairly minor, and if you are not already working in the home performance field there's actually some value to hearing information twice and from two different perspectives. While there is overlap, there are also areas in which the trainings diverge. For example, in the HERS training you learn about duct leakage testing, but for BPI duct leakage is only part of the Heating and Cooling curricula. And in the Building Analyst (BPI) training you learn a lot about combustion safety testing, a topic that is not normally covered during the course of a HERS training. Many people take both trainings in order to fully prepare themselves for the associated exams, to work in a variety of programs in their area, or to offer advisory services.

How can a HERS rater become a HERS Provider?

RESNET has a good explanation of [requirements](#) for becoming a provider. Since providers are responsible for quality assurance, a fair amount of experience with ratings and diagnostic testing is essential.

Can building professionals (builders, architects, HVAC, etc.) also offer HERS ratings?

Ratings and diagnostic testing for any green home certification program must be performed by an objective third party. Instead of becoming a rater, after training it may appropriate for you to license REM/Design, a related software, directly from Architectural Energy Corporation (www.archenergy.com/products/rem).

Licensing REM/Design would provide you will the capability to perform energy modeling, do what-ifs, look at payback periods for different efficiency measures, see whether the home passes the state energy code, explore zero-net energy design, etc. *If this is a path that makes sense for you, you would not have to own diagnostic testing equipment or pursue rater certification and quality assurance oversight through a HERS provider.*

How long after passing the rater exam do I have to complete my rater certification?

After rater training there is a lot of technical information to digest. Provisional raters have one year since passing the test to complete the certification process. If they do not, they must repeat certification requirements again.