

Ross Britton of U.S.Ecologic/TexEnergy at the 2016 EEBA Conference in Frisco, TX. (07:52 min; 7,596 KB)

Kat Godlewski: Welcome to the US Environmental Protection Agency's Indoor airPLUS podcast series. This episode is being recorded at the 2016 EEBA Conference and Expo in Frisco, Texas. The Indoor airPLUS team has the privilege of chatting with Ross Britton of U.S. Ecologic/TexEnergy Solutions to discuss how to address perceived program barriers with builders and how to communicate to both builders and homebuyers the value of the Indoor airPLUS Program and homes with improved indoor air quality.

Nick Hurst: Well we're here at the 2016 EEBA Conference (Energy and Environmental Building Alliance) and Ross Britton is with us.

Ross, your company, US-EcoLogic, TexEnergy Solutions, is an Indoor airPLUS Rater partner and you work with a number of ENERGY STAR and Indoor airPLUS builders. When you're speaking about the program to your clients initially, what do you find to be your strongest or most impactful value proposition that you use to help them understand what Indoor airPLUS offers?

Ross Britton: Well Indoor airPLUS offers some measure of trying to create a healthier and more comfortable home. Surveys now show that that's what homeowners want. They want return on investment, they want a healthier, more comfortable home, and Indoor airPLUS provides both of those.

Nick Hurst: We certainly think so as well. We know that there are some builders who are new to the program. They initially don't quite understand the additions that come on top of ENERGY STAR with Indoor airPLUS, so what do you find some of the common challenges are that make builders hesitant, possibly, to adopt the Construction Specifications across all their homes right away? And how do you address those hesitations?

Ross Britton: Most of the protocols for Indoor airPLUS are fairly simple, and I think it's important like, with all above energy code programs, to be proactive in talking to the builder about his construction specifications, getting the prescriptive measures that are in the program in the construction specifications in the first place.

The challenge is probably – the two biggest challenges are probably getting the construction specifications to show the proper materials, the low- and no-VOC products, and Indoor airPLUS has a guide that they've put out that shows the approved products, so if you can access your builder to those approved products in the first place, it makes writing those construction specs easier. Then it's just a matter of verifying those items in the field.

The second protocol that takes a little bit of doing is covering the duct work during construction. Getting the HVAC contractor into the habit of doing that requires some trades training in the field. It requires maybe showing him what products to use that make it easy to do that, but that's just a little bit of extra time and it's certainly got a lot of value.

Nick Hurst: Great. Other than providing your standard home energy rating service, what else does US EcoLogic provide clients in regards to indoor air quality?

Ross Britton: We'll do almost anything a homebuilder requests from insulation inspections, moisture analysis, forensic analysis, even just a walk-through of the home with the homeowner to show the customer how he can create better indoor air quality in the home once they move in.

Nick Hurst: That's very important. You and I had a session earlier and in that session I noticed you brought up some interesting points about becoming an expert consultant for your builders, not just a home energy rater, but someone who's a trusted advisor. They monitor the details, the design and construction details closely, you help the builder stay ahead of the curve as far as code and standards continue to evolve. Every year EPA offers the Indoor airPLUS Leader Awards and that's where Indoor airPLUS Rater partners that are doing that kind of mentorship with their builders and helping them participate in the program can apply for an Indoor airPLUS Leader Award. There's actually awards for both Raters and builders. They're generally announced by EPA in late spring and your sister company, TexEnergy Solutions, has won that award a couple times. There's also some other Rater and builder winners here at the EEBA Conference this year, so this is another great opportunity for Indoor airPLUS partners to showcase their commitment to the program, something that I certainly encourage all partners to consider when it becomes available early next year. What type of marketing advantage specifically do you think your company finds from partnering with Indoor airPLUS and how do you use the program to help you from a business standpoint?

Ross Britton: Well, I think that it's an easy add-on if you're already an ENERGY STAR Provider for your builders to add the Indoor airPLUS program because, like I said previously, people are concerned about their health, about their kid's health, how to create better indoor air quality in the home, and all the benefits that come from that. I like to promote that Raters should think of themselves more as energy consultants, and as an energy consultant, certainly you can consult on indoor air quality. One of the things that makes this a valuable add-on from a business standpoint is the inspections can be done at the same time as the ENERGY STAR inspections, so there's a low overhead cost to perform the inspections, and then that's an easy add-on to really build the revenue and the profit since you're out at the home anyway. So it's a low overhead, revenue building, and profit increasing value proposition.

Nick Hurst: Great. One last question. From the standpoint of liability, you know there are some builders who may be hesitant to get into Indoor airPLUS because they are concerned about what it means to communicate health to their clients and may be concerned that it might be offering too much in the way of a promise or guarantee by using the Indoor airPLUS label. Do you navigate that question at all with you builders, and how do you explore that with them to help them communicate what Indoor airPLUS provides for the homebuyer?

Ross Britton: Well actually, I navigated that question for the first time today. One of the things is that builder sales people don't have to make technical promises to get their point across. I think it's important that builder sales people talk about a cleaner, healthier home. Elaborate on some simple marketing ideas for that homeowner, such as the filter in the HVAC system, the lack of carpeting in the utility rooms and the bathrooms and the kitchens, to create a healthier home. I think that that lowers the liability, but also gets the message across that this is value proposition.

Nick Hurst: Yea, absolutely. Well we find that question come up regularly and we always try to communicate that there's certainly no guarantees that any one individual is going to be cured of their health ailments by using Indoor airPLUS, but we certainly find that Indoor airPLUS has a great

combination of materials, resources, techniques that combined certainly will help limit risk for homebuyers and the health and safety of their family.

Certainly appreciate you taking a little bit of time from the conference and time out of your day today to visit us Ross. Thanks again.

Ross Britton: Absolutely. Enjoy the program Nick. Thank you!