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A BRIGHT SPOT IN THE BAY AREA'S HOME CONTRACTING INDUSTRY

*ABC Cooling & Heating Joins GreenHomes America Network to Perform Energy Retrofits,
Create Construction Jobs in Bay Area*

HAYWARD, CA—July 16, 2010 —In a move reflecting growing homeowner interest in improving home energy efficiency and lowering their utility bills, ABC Cooling & Heating Services, one of the Bay Area's premier residential heating and cooling contractors, has signed a franchise agreement with GreenHomes America, a national firm that specializes in home performance contracting (HPC). This relationship will allow ABC Cooling & Heating to tap into one of the few bright spots in the contracting and construction industry, which has been the hardest hit sector of the economy in this recession. Unemployment figures in the building trades continue to hover around 17 percent. In contrast, firms specializing in home performance contracting are adding employees, an example of the much talked about "green jobs" boom.

ABC Cooling & Heating has offices in Fresno and Hayward, and employs 40 full-time professionals. The 55-year-old firm has served over 100,000 homeowners in the Central San Joaquin Valley Region, Silicon Valley, and San Francisco Bay Area within the last 10 years.

ABC Owner and President Jerry Unruh explains his decision to enter the home performance contracting market. “It was very clear to us that the future of traditional heating, ventilating, and air conditioning (HVAC) firms like ours was going to be home performance contracting. While we’ve always been focused on installing the highest efficiency products in our customer’s homes, the paradigm today has shifted from this piecemeal approach to one that looks at the whole house. Customers increasingly look to HVAC contractors as energy experts, and they want us to offer them holistic solutions that achieve not just energy savings, but also the improved comfort that goes along with it. We typically see savings of 20 to 60 percent, and when we do an entire house project, starting and ending with an energy audit, we guarantee a minimum increase in efficiency of 25 percent.”

THE HPC PROCESS

Home performance contractors begin their work with a home energy audit, which uses advanced technology such as blower doors, infrared cameras, and computerized modeling to assess a home’s unique energy usage footprint and comfort issues. The energy audit diagnoses where the home is leaking air to the outside; measures the efficiency of cooling and heating systems; determines the effectiveness of insulation, ducts, windows, and doors; and checks combustion safety and gas leaks. After work is completed by in-house crews, the home energy audit is performed again to ensure issues are fixed and the project is successful.

The before and after energy audits precisely measure the actual effects the home performance work produced. Mike Rogers, Vice President at GreenHomes America, offers an example of a residential project, which included air sealing, insulating, and the installation of an energy-efficient furnace and tankless water heater. “We did an energy audit at the beginning of the project, and another at the end.”

Rogers added, “We used a blower door to pull air from the house, measuring the air leakage and finding the trouble spots. We then air sealed the attic and added 12 inches of insulation. This allowed us to put in a smaller furnace and air conditioner because of the new efficiency levels, which saved them money and represented tremendous energy savings with a return on investment of about 10 to 20 percent. That’s pretty good by any standard.”

Home performance contractors take a big-picture approach to achieving an efficient, comfortable home. “Many homeowners are misguided about which home improvements actually result in substantial utility savings,” according to Rogers. “Before you make any energy improvements, you need an energy audit performed. This will tell you which improvements will make the biggest impact on your utility bills and indoor comfort issues. Things like replacing windows, for example, often offer the least bang for the buck. Less glamorous stuff, like air sealing your attic and ducts, and increasing the amount of insulation in your attic and walls makes a huge difference. And, it can cost much less.”

UNEXPECTED BENEFITS

Beyond the obvious benefits of significant energy savings and increased comfort, a home performance makeover can yield unanticipated but important benefits. Indoor air quality can be markedly improved. Eliminating air leaks, holes, and gaps in insulation prevents outside air infiltration, and stops allergens from entering a clean house. And a thermally efficient, tight home is not prone to mold and mildew, both allergy triggers. In fact, Rogers points out that some customers will perform this work specifically for relief of allergies. Additionally, according to Rogers, about 50 percent of the time they enter home, they find and fix dangerous or life-threatening issues in the house, such as natural gas leaks and unsafe levels of carbon monoxide.

A variety of state, Federal and local incentives are available to homeowners to offset much of the costs associated with HPC work. Like many states and cities, California has established aggressive energy efficiency goals, including a 40 percent reduction in overall residential energy consumption by 2020, and these incentives exist to help achieve these goals. Rogers explains that the upcoming cash rebates provided by PG&E for home performance solutions will be exclusive to BPI-accredited contractors like ABC Cooling & Heating. These will be in addition to current factory rebates as well as Federal tax credits expiring at the end of December this year. “Given such powerful incentives, we anticipate a quick start-up and early success providing HPC services from Hayward to San Jose,” says Unruh. “GreenHomes is the industry leader and has already developed a complete business system. With their help, we’ll be growing our business and creating new jobs. Energy efficiency represents the future of our industry, and I’m glad to be a part of it.”

More information on home performance contracting is available at www.abccooling.com or at www.greenhomesamerica.com or by calling ABC Heating & Cooling at (559) 292-9240.

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Irvine-based GreenHomes America is the premier industry-accredited, single-source provider of home performance contracting (HPC) in the U.S., with locations nationally. GreenHomes America offers an award-winning home improvement service that significantly enhances the comfort, energy efficiency, and air quality of existing single- and multi-family homes. GreenHomes America delivers a full line of home performance and HVAC services including comprehensive home energy audits, windows and doors, high-efficiency furnaces, boilers, and water heaters, insulation and air-sealing, indoor air quality, and solar systems. We guarantee to save homeowners at least 25% on their energy usage. GreenHomes America works with *Home Performance with ENERGY STAR*, is a Building Performance Institute (BPI) accredited organization, and is a founding member of Efficiency First. For more information on GreenHomes America, call 1.877.867.2833 or visit www.greenhomesamerica.com.