

Agency warns Roanoke, New River valleys of energy-efficiency product claims

Posted: Wednesday, February 26, 2014 9:49 pm

A local government agency is warning homeowners in the Roanoke and New River valleys to be “wary” of two out-of-state companies offering energy efficiency products locally.

The companies, EnergE Squad of Maryland and American Home Energy Audit of Minnesota, have mailed postcards inviting recipients to a free meal and presentation on ways to save energy and lower utility bills, according to the Roanoke Valley Alleghany Regional Commission, a regional planning agency. The commission released cards summoning people to a Roanoke restaurant on Jan. 21 and 22 and a Blacksburg restaurant on Feb. 10 and 11.

The products being marketed are a radiant barrier material applied to shield a building and slow heat transfer, and a power factor correction device installed at the electrical panel, said Mason Cavell, director of energy efficiency programs at Community Housing Partners, a Christiansburg-based nonprofit focused on housing.

While the products have beneficial applications, they’ll afford little or no energy savings when installed in a typical Southwest Virginia home, according to Cavell.

Cavell said he’s joining the commission in issuing the warning because he’s worried that people will invest in products that won’t help them instead of products that could. Save A Ton, a commission site found at saveaton.org, is one resource for people who want to save energy and natural resources and shrink their carbon impact by starting out with do-it-yourself steps before possibly turning to a contractor, he said.

“Because energy audits and energy-related retrofits can be complex undertakings and require long-term investments, we want to make sure folks have all the information they need to make good decisions,” said Jeremy Holmes, who runs the commission’s sustainability programs.

Messages left for the owners of EnergE Squad and American Home Energy Audit were not returned Thursday.