

Writing Energy Specifications

An open discussion led by John Krigger and Rob deKieffer

Why write specifications?

Specifications are the specific important aspects of energy programs. It is the guidance from program managers to technicians on the ground.

- Specifications say how to do something without harming anyone or anything. Example: Disconnect power before removing air-handler blower.
- Specifications contain specific numerical standards to be achieved. Example: Reduction in duct leakage.
- Specifications contain rules for completing a successful project or collecting a rebate or other incentive. Example: Reduce duct leakage by 50% and collect \$250.
- Specifications tell what materials are acceptable and unacceptable.

The most difficult energy conservation specifications

About 20% of specifications are controversial, ambiguous, uncertain, or difficult to explain.

- Insulating and air-sealing the foundation/floor
- Duct sealing: What to require?
- Window U-factor: Pick a number.
- Air sealing: MVL and approach

Adventures in terminology

Pick one term for each concept, and stick with it. Unfortunately it's often not that simple. Examples of synonyms.

- MVL, BTL, BAS
- U-value, U-factor
- Air barrier, pressure boundary, airflow retarder
- Thermal barrier, insulation
- Vapor barrier, vapor retarder

The politics of spec writing

Spend 80% of your time on the 20% of specs that are most controversial. Concentrate on stakeholders that care the most about the content.

- Reach out to key stakeholders immediately.

- Propose solutions to controversies
- Writing by committee can work! Write a straw man and let them knock it down in a meeting. Don't quit until you're done.
- Don't wait for reviewers: Tell them they're responsible for mistakes and that the document will be done soon.
- Be prepared to be blamed for people's disappointment with the process
- Try, try, try to eliminate mistakes, but don't let perfectionism paralyze you.