

# An inspector calls

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Saturday April 7, 2007

[The Guardian](#)

They're an army of eco-snoopers unleashed by the government, prying into intimate family details such as use of baths, showers, washing machines and dishwashers - and possibly landing you with higher council tax bills. Well, that's what certain newspapers are telling their readers about the new home inspectors responsible for producing Energy Performance Certificates.

The truth is, of course, far more mundane. I invited an inspector round to my south London home this week to carry out an EPC. The inspection took a little less than an hour. There were no questions about my spin cycle, how many times I flush or how frequently I wash. You don't even have to hide the patio heater.

The inspector, from House Inspect Ltd, a home information pack provider, measured the lengths and heights of each room, examined the building construction and water and heating systems. He popped into the loft and had a good look at the roof, and took a keen interest in the boiler. But that was about it. Within 24 hours I was emailed my certificate, grading my home at the bottom end of band D (in a scale that runs from a tip-top A to a leaky G) for energy efficiency and more of a D+ for its environmental impact.

It seems my Edwardian solid brick walls are very poor in terms of environmental impact, but the new condensing combi boiler is good. The single-glazed windows were poor and the standard lighting (just two low-energy bulbs) was very poor.

The eight-page report gave estimates for my energy use and suggestions on how I could make savings. The chief recommendations were upgraded loft insulation (an estimated saving of £20 a year) and a switch to low energy light bulbs (another £32 saving). It also suggested further measures such as double glazing, internal wall insulation and solar panels. But even if I did all this (at huge cost), the house would only nudge up to grade C.

The service was efficient and professional. But is it worth it? Firstly, home sellers have no choice; the EPC is a mandatory part of the home information pack. Secondly, you are not allowed to do it yourself. It has to be done by a qualified home inspector or domestic energy assessor. House Inspect Ltd have been engaged in the government pilot project, and would have charged £100 for the report were it not for the fact that my borough, Southwark, is one of the government-sponsored pilot areas where EPCs are currently free.

The fee is not unreasonable given the amount of time spent at your home. But will a buyer pay any attention to the report? My guess is that the house price, location, schools, mortgage, transport and so on will merit a lot more attention than the need for a bit more loft insulation.