Hi,

As a property manager, landlord, and a licensed general contractor for over 35 years I would like to express my thoughts about reducing fossil fuel consumption in this state. I currently maintain around 11,000 sq feet of rental housing which comprises 14 kitchens, 14 bathrooms, 11 boilers.

Water consumption. We might be the only state where tenants do not see water bills. Over the past 20 years I have testified a few different times at the state house to have water metering separation IF the landlord installs low flow everything AND IF the landlord decides to do it. Around 5 years ago there was a watered down version passed and water metering companies came in to sell or lease their meters and do the billing. The funds collected by the metering companies made it a turn off for landlords to do it. And there is another huge issue: water & sewer usage bills go out every 3 or 4 months (some cities can read the water meters multiple times per day). Most of the time a tenant moves out mid billing cycle so how does one calculate that? And then there is factoring in the block rate billing (where the more water consumed translates into higher prices per gallon) which if were eliminated would mean one set price.
In the past I answered the phone for a landlord group. I remember an elderly widow Rose in Somerville who saw her quarterly water bill jump from 400 to 1400. She knew the tenant on the second floor was leaving the water running (as verified by a plumber in the basement) however the tenant would NOT allow the plumber into the apartment.
I currently know of a Medford landlady whose tenant was too lazy to notify her that their toilet was running constantly. Her bill is now at 3k.
I know of a woman who rented a unit and her water bill spiked a few hundred. She drove by one night to see a large van in the driveway with a hose running to it from the second floor kitchen. The sign on the truck said “Pool Topping Off Service”.
And 6 mos ago another tenant retaliation story where in Brighton they ran the faucets all day long and their bill is well over a grand more than normal.

In all of the cases the water bill went directly to the homeowner. In those cases it was a total waste of water which imo is a natural resource. In addition water is pumped out of the ground, pumped to homes, pumped to sewage treatment plants – which consumes electricity. More electricity used = more fossil fuel consumption = more particles in our atmosphere.
In my experience after we installed low flow devices a third were removed within a few months.
The state web site used to say that when an end user pays for their personal consumption that the usage goes down 19 percent. Every parent can say they got up and closed their child's windows in the winter or turned off lights in the non-occupied rooms. I have seen people wait 15 minutes for the water temperature to be right *when it was at the correct temperature in 60 seconds* and tell me to my face that they did not care as they were not paying for it.
If other states can do it and their towns can bill tenants directly, then why can't this state do it? If a city cannot do it – then sub it out for the sake of the environment. The continued non billing to the end user is resulting in more water, more sewage, and more electrical consumption.
Every time I went to testify legal aid spoke up and said the wording is "landlord shall SUPPLY". And it got bogged down as to the definition of the word "supply". Anyone who cares about water conservation should be advocating for allowing a landlord to split up water between apartments IF the landlord can and wants to.

Heating systems. I maintain 11 boilers and have a basic understanding of them. Most of ours are higher efficiency. The higher efficiency ones break more often due to more parts internally. The higher efficiency ones are more difficult to repair than the older simpler ones. Many times the repair cost = the savings of the past couple of years. Sadly they go down when they are most needed which is in the winter, coldest snaps. Being there are fewer people familiar with them its more difficult to get someone to repair them AND there is a higher labor cost. Then there is the parts issue as if its nights or weekend or a holiday there is no heat for days. The parts distributors are NOT open off hours. (I cannot believe that some enterprising person does not have an around the clock huge parts supply house (and charge more for off hours to pay the help) within the state.)

Pipes can freeze and burst if it's a cold snap. I feel that the high eff boiler manufacturers should have some sort of "bypass" switch where the high efficiency option is not used and it reverts back to a basic operational boiler. Of course it should be safe. Some heat would be better than no heat which sometimes results in frozen pipes.

When a landlord undertakes a bigger project such as a boiler replacement its not a one year write off. The cost is deducted over 27.7 years. The plumber and electrician and boiler manufacturer want to be paid immediately and not over a 27.5 year period. This 27.5 years is the state and the IRS tax code. The cost should be allowed to be written off the year that it was installed. The landlord is either faced with paying for it out of their own pocket with after taxed dollars or borrowing funds.

In some buildings there is one larger boiler with multiple apartments where every apartment has their own thermostat. Once again the tenants are not seeing the heating bill which sometimes results in open windows in the winter & the temperature set at 85 degrees (yes I have walked into apts that hot) ☹ In Europe they figured out a way to bill each user for their personal consumption of heat. Its basically a formula as to how many gallons of hot water are extracted and what the water temperature is. I am going to guess that they use less heat and fossil fuel when they are paying for it. I have NOT seen or heard of any such device in this country.

Appliances. Odds are when a fridge or oven or range is replaced its usually more efficient that the one removed. Sadly its depreciated over either 5 or 7 years.

I think it would be a great idea for the members of this group to propose totally eliminating depreciation on appliances and heating systems if the end result is less fossil fuel consumption. Plus replacing those items results in sales tax of the item, more work for contractors, and more manufacturing jobs. It's a win win win win for all.

Windows.

When houses are close to one another some high efficiency windows are reflecting the heat to their neighbor's house. Some fires have been reported. Other times the windows have resulted in damaged vinyl siding. Here is a picture.

Here are some links to the issue:
In Somerville https://www.necn.com/multimedia/Somerville-House-Catches-Fire-3-Times_NECN-468911273.html
This old house https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oyis1tbBxBY
A scientist in Mass. https://www.wral.com/-the-next-asbestos-scientist-says-low-e-windows-cause-dangerous-reflection/17553558/
down south https://www.dwmmag.com/fires-raise-questions-about-windows-and-reflective-heat/
https://www.houselogic.com/remodel/windows-doors-and-floors/energy-efficient-windows-causing-siding-to-melt/
My points here are:

1. Hopefully someone can research the types of windows that do not cause these issues. And make a list of them for ALL 351 communities to have as handouts. Hopefully this will prevent this from becoming more of a problem between neighbors. It would be sad if someone spends a lot of

money to swap out windows that will result in causing issues for others such as fires or melted siding.

2. I hope that roof solar arrays are not reflecting heat.

Thanks,
Allen