

Frequently Asked Questions for “Independent” HERS Raters: Rater Certification and Building a Business



NEHERS Quality Assurance Providers Working with Independent Raters in the Northeast

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Other Providers for Independents

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What are the differences between an energy auditor and a HERS Rater?

The term “energy auditor” is very broad, and is usually used in conjunction with a state audit program. Standards for energy auditors (training, type of audit given) vary, while HERS raters are uniformly certified across the US and require quality assurance oversight through an accredited provider. Many programs require a HERS rating, such as ENERGY STAR Homes certification and Energy Efficient Mortgages; some state codes have started requiring HERS ratings.

What are the differences between Building Performance Institute (BPI) training and HERS Rater training?

The degree of training overlap is fairly minor, and includes building science and energy concept training, blower door diagnostics, and combustion safety. While there is overlap, there are also areas in which the trainings diverge. Specifically, BPI training does not include the duct testing or energy modeling training included in HERS Rater training. Many people take both trainings in order to fully prepare themselves for the associated exams, to work in a variety of programs in their area, or to offer advisory services.

What business types or niches are appropriate for raters?

Even before you take your training, you should have a plan for marketing your services in the existing or new home market. Determine what State Utility Incentive programs are available in your area, and understand the building code requirements, as some states now require a HERS ratings for new construction. In addition to HERS Ratings, you can offer consulting services to builders or Home owners, become a Quality Assurance Provider, or a trainer. When you become certified and if you join the NE HERS Alliance, your name will be listed on our website www.nehers.org. Our certified rater members are eligible to earn continuing education credits through our monthly webinars.

What equipment will I need to perform ratings?

Independent raters will need access to blower door equipment and a duct blaster. Some raters use infrared cameras, but they are not required. Equipment Information: www.retrotec.com.

How does an independent rater meet RESNET’s quality assurance standard?

Provisionary raters must go through the certification process with an accredited Quality Assurance (QA) Provider, and, following certification, must work for, as, or with a provider such as those listed at the left.¹ You can also

contact other accredited providers that are listed on RESNET’s website: www.resnet.us. If you are serious about entering the rating field, we recommend knowing what kind of business you are planning and engaging in a relationship with a provider even before attending training.

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How many provisional ratings are required to become certified?

Technically, a minimum of 5 ratings must be reviewed for certification. Two of these must be reviewed by a certified trainer, which is most easily accomplished during our rater training class. After that, your provider's Quality Assurance Designee will ask to review a minimum of three ratings, with more if necessary to ensure satisfactory rater understanding of the standards.

What is the process for a provisional rater to earn their certification?

At the end of the training you can continue to use a non-printing version of HERS software received in class for a period of 30 days before it expires. Because of this expiration, and to keep the knowledge fresh, it would be wise to make arrangements with a HERS provider for your certification before the 30 days is over, and to begin using a copy of their software that allows printable rating reports. The provider's Quality Assurance Designee may want to see ratings from a variety of homes - new, ranch, colonial, contemporary, duplex, etc., and perhaps from both construction drawings and/or from site evaluation. You will likely be asked to demonstrate that you have worked with an assortment of diagnostic needs - basements, crawl spaces, attics, slab construction, etc.

How can a HERS rater become a HERS QA Provider?

RESNET has a good explanation of [requirements](#) for becoming a provider. Since providers are responsible for quality assurance, a fair amount of experience with ratings and diagnostic testing is essential.

Can building professionals (builders, architects, HVAC, etc.) also offer HERS ratings?

Ratings and diagnostic testing for any green home certification program must be performed by an objective third party. Instead of becoming a rater, after training it may appropriate for you to license REM/Design, a related software, directly from Architectural Energy Corporation (www.archenergy.com/products/rem).

Licensing REM/Design would provide you will the capability to perform energy modeling, perform what-ifs, look at payback periods for different efficiency measures, see whether the home passes the state energy code, explore zero-net energy design, etc. *If this is a path that makes sense for you, you would not have to own diagnostic testing equipment or pursue rater certification and quality assurance oversight through a HERS provider.*

How long after passing the rater exam do I have to complete my rater certification?

After rater training there is a lot of technical information to digest. Provisional raters have one year since passing the test to complete the certification process. If they do not, they must repeat certification requirements again.

What should I ask QA Providers when I contact them?

Before contacting providers to find your match, be prepared to discuss what kind of a business structure you are planning. You will want to inquire about: a) how many ratings they review for your certification, and what kind of homes they would like to see you rate; b) the cost for overseeing ratings and guiding you through the certification process; c) whether the company is willing to provide oversight of your ratings as your HERS Provider; and d) any ongoing fees they might charge per-rating or for quality assurance oversight.

¹ *Although NE HERS members include QA providers, the organization does not serve as a QA provider.*