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## Company promotes geothermal heating, cooling systems

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Richard Mead put one in his home because it helps with his drafty old farm house. After that, he spread the word to the company he works for.

The product was geothermal heating and cooling, a system that uses heat from the Earth to heat and cool a structure. The manager at Point Heating & Cooling said word of mouth started this, and that accounts for 95 percent of the company's geothermal installations.

"We're trying to phase out fossil fuel heating systems," Mead said. The company installs GeoComfort geothermal heating and cooling systems and has been installing geothermal systems since 1995.

Geothermal heating and cooling provides no emissions, Mead said, and there is an infinite amount of free heat in the earth.

And geothermal heating and cooling may reduce the amount of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere.

"The biggest part of our carbon dioxide buildup is home heating," he said. "Fuel oil is the worst offender on the environment."

There are several layers to geothermal systems' "green" ways, Mead said, including cutting down on service calls and fuel because of less need for maintenance. GeoComfort also uses recycled blue jeans in their systems.

Mead said about 30 systems are installed per year, running about half and half with new construction and existing homes.

Benefits to geothermal heating and cooling systems may also be economic.

Geothermal heating and cooling systems may boast 300 percent to 400 percent efficiency, which means for every dollar spent, three to four times that amount comes back, Mead said. To contrast, an efficient conventional furnace would run with a 95 percent efficiency, meaning for every dollar spend a nickel is lost, he said.

"They call it a positive cash flow heating system," Mead said.

That's why David Belk put a geothermal system in his home, built about five years ago. He has a closed loop system in his home, north of Stevens Point.

"When we did the research on the payback, it just seemed like a no-brainer," he said.

The EPA has listed geothermal as the most efficient way to heat a home. Mead said average savings run about \$50 for the average home versus conventional fossil fuel systems.

Mead said installing a geothermal system into an existing home can run between \$6,000 to \$8,000. New construction may run from \$15,000 to \$20,000.

But this eco-friendly way to heat and cool a home isn't a new phenomenon.

Mead said geothermal has been around since the earliest refrigerators, and became popular as long as 30 years ago.

"It's not a new technology," he said.

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