

# Efficiency Vermont's Efficiency Excellence Network (EEN) CONTRACTOR SPOTLIGHT: Sisler Builders Energy Division



INTERVIEW WITH MIKE D'MUHALA, ENERGY DIVISION MANAGER, STOWE, VERMONT

G.E.T. Staff

**G.E.T.:** How and when did you get started in this industry?

**Mike D'Muhala:** In 2009, Sisler Builders opened its Energy Division to focus on helping Vermonters make their homes more efficient, healthy, and comfortable. We offer energy audits, energy retrofit services, and "green guidance" primarily in the Waterbury, Stowe, and Morrisville areas.

**What projects do people try to do themselves that really should be done professionally?**

**MD:** Dense-pack cellulose and two-part spray foam insulations should be installed by professionals. The required equipment is expensive and both can be very tricky to install properly without the proper training and a lot of experience. Most of the work happens in the attics, basements, and crawlspaces which most people find to be rather unpleasant places to work as well. Also, getting a professional energy audit prior to starting retrofit work will help you spend your money more wisely and ensure the improvements you choose do not create unsafe or unhealthy conditions in your home or commercial building.

**If you could only choose one type of project to reduce someone's carbon footprint or improve efficiency, what would it be and why?**

**MD:** If I could only recommend one improvement to a homeowner, it would almost always be comprehensive air-sealing. Significantly reducing air leakage in a home not only saves a lot of money



Members of Sisler's Energy Division crew are (l to r): Chuck, Lou, Kerson, and Mike D'Muhala. (Courtesy photo)

on heating bills, but it typically makes the home much more comfortable and reduces dust, spiders, insects, rodents, and outside noise! Most people do not appreciate what a big difference air-sealing can make until they feel it for themselves. From cold and drafty to warm and cozy!

**Can you share one job project that really stands out to you as moving from inefficiency to efficiency?**

**MD:** I cannot think of a single project that stands out above all the others we have done. I have performed over 1,400 energy audits, and our crews have performed several hundred energy retrofit projects. Some projects are very small, just a few hundred dollars, and some are as much as \$60-70,000! Almost without exception, our customers are thrilled with

the felt improvement and savings they see.

**What is it in your field of specialty is most valuable (related to energy efficiency or the EEN) that our readers ought to know about?**

**MD:** I think the energy audit and evaluation is the most valuable service we offer our customers. An audit helps them make informed decisions about how best to spend their money to achieve their specific efficiency

and comfort goals. Without the necessary knowledge, it's very easy to spend a lot of money going down the wrong path.

**Why should people use an EEN member over someone else?**

**MD:** Choosing an EEN member contractor ensures they are committed to high standards, excellent service, and the latest technologies and techniques.

**What are the best ways to finance projects (or what incentives are available) for residential or commercial projects?**

**MD:** Some banks offer very low or no interest on qualifying energy loans. Efficiency Vermont historically offers rebates and incentives towards many energy saving improvements. Currently, they are offering a rebate on air-sealing and insulation upgrades of 75% project cost up to \$4,000



At a typical retrofit project, Sisler's Energy Division vacuums old insulation out of an attic in preparation for air sealing the attic. (Courtesy photo)

(and up to \$9,500 for income-eligible Vermonters)! Most electric utility companies offer additional rebates as well. Specifics often vary from town to town.

**What are some questions you recommend customers ask when selecting someone to do work to meet energy efficiency goals?**

**MD:** Are you an EEN member contractor? Are you BPI (Building Performance Institute) Certified? Will the work you do qualify for Efficiency Vermont rebates? ♻️