

Green Insulation

BY EMILY HERENDEEN; PHOTOGRAPHS PROVIDED



EcoTech spray foam's insulation is a much more efficient, ecofriendly alternative to fiberglass, made of all natural materials. The company's eye-catching truck runs seven days a week throughout the Hudson Valley.

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Any builder who is trying to green their home understands that the building block—the foundation of green building—is your insulation,” says Charles Petersheim, founder of EcoTech Spray Foam. Located in Sullivan County, EcoTech has created its own line of ecofriendly spray insulation, an alternative to fiberglass, that reduces energy loss and lowers monthly heating and cooling costs, he says.

EcoTech launched in February 2009 after only two months of groundwork. At a time when other businesses were downsizing and cutting expenses, Petersheim decided to expand beyond his construction business and take advantage of an untapped marketplace, creating and marketing his own spray foam.

Being that they would be the only independent spray foam business in the area and that the raw materials to start the business could be bought at a low price, Petersheim says it was an ideal time to launch. “It’s cliché, but if you’re going to buy, buy when no one else is buying,” he says. The entrepreneur was able to start slowly, without an oversaturated clientele, and focus on a distinct marketing scheme with a comprehensive, methodical approach to developing his brand. Part of that brand includes EcoTech’s spray foam truck, with its eye-catching, 1950s-style logo—a beaming star with a retro font slogan that reads, “Insulation you’ll brag about!”

After testing various soy and recyclable products to make the foam, he came up with a product made of 29 percent recycled goods, free of HCFCs (hydrochlorofluorocarbons, a chemical harmful to the ozone layer), VOCs (volatile organic compounds), and formaldehyde, beating out competitors’ products.

The foam’s biggest benefit is its energy efficiency, which in turn equates to cost efficiency. “The less you’re losing, the less you’re using,” says Petersheim. Spray foam seals your home so you lose less heat, meaning that it takes less to heat it.

Spray foam's ability to create a barrier for air coming in and going out of the home is a vast improvement over previous forms of insulation, which can amount to 50 percent savings in a basement or attic, Petersheim explains. Clients often call back within a few months after they have received their lowered heating bills, but the air environment within the home transforms even quicker. "They [clients] can say that almost overnight the environment within their home has changed," he says.

EcoTech's other aim was to make foam more affordable. "You couldn't justify spending \$12,000 to insulate when you could do it with \$3,500 for bad insulation," says Petersheim.

Petersheim says that by starting his own company, he has unlocked the monopoly that made spray foams so expensive and has reduced prices by 50 percent through the Hudson Valley.

"We find our competitors now, who we were using in our own homes, have dropped their prices 40 to 50 percent because we are running a true business and eating into their market share," he says.

A more affordable installation cost, savings on energy bills, and now a governmental tax rebate program of up to \$1,600 or 30 percent of projects under \$4,500, makes spray foam an alternative that may ultimately surpass the fiberglass standard.

"We believe that spray foam is going to change the face of construction. It's in its infancy, but it's going to rapidly take over the market," Petersheim predicts.