

BY GARRY UPTON

Over the course of 2009, this space will identify opportunities within customers' homes that you may not have observed in the past. The opportunities are based on a recent homeowner survey conducted by Decision Analyst, Inc.

Q Does your research reveal any potential opportunities related to home water heaters?

A Last month we discussed expanding your service contracts or clean and checks to include other products in the home. Here are some of the numbers from the American Home Comfort report to help you understand the possible opportunities.

- The average homeowner has lived in their home for 11 years. Based on our research today, the average age of a water heater is just under seven years (6.8). That means many are working way past the safety zone of their water heaters, and are risking flooded carpets or ruined keepsakes caused by water tank breakage.

- A large number of homeowners — 15 to 16 out of every 100 — have no idea how energy efficient their water

heater is. Of those who do, more than half (52%) know it's a standard efficient unit. By the way, that's the same score for homeowners in general as well as for homeowners who have just replaced their HVAC system.

There appears to be no link between HVAC replacement and water heater replacement today. That makes doing this new. In this age of energy savings and green thinking, this appears to be a very strong marketing addition. Those who are adding a central system (in some cases due to home renovation or additions) are more apt to have a high or super high efficient water heater (46% standard; 44% high efficiency; and 10% super high).

What are the opportunities? From the numbers reported by homeowners, adding plumbing— or at least wa-

ter heater plumbing checks — to your business seems to be a very positive business decision. Of course, having the expertise needed to find the problems before they become a flood or fire hazard is essential.

Including a water heater inspection expands your overall service contract benefit. A professional review of a possible hidden nuisance and/or danger in the home expands your consultative positioning with your customer as well.

With tankless water heaters— another new U.S. comfort phenomenon — this addition may be even more promising. **B**

Garry Upton, of Decision Analyst, Inc., shares his interpretations of its American Home Comfort Study of homeowners, and explores what customers look for in HVAC contractors. To learn more about this study, or to purchase it, contact Garry at gupton@decisionanalyst.com.