RESNET Sets Path to Rating Quality Improvement

Across the nation the RESNET HERS Index Score is fast becoming a mainstream in the housing market. Homebuilders are having their homes energy rated and marketing the HERS Index Score of their homes, Multiple Listing Services (MLS) are incorporating the HERS Index Scores in their listings and code jurisdictions are recognizing a HERS Index Score as a building energy code compliance option. With the increased visibility of the HERS Index Score RESNET is obligated to ensure that HERS Index Scores are as consistent as possible.

This need has been made more important with the International Code Council adopting an Energy Rating Index option to the 2015 International Energy Conservation Code.

To achieve this goal RESNET formed the HERS Index Score Consistency Task Force. Members of the task force were representatives of the nation's largest production builders, rating software tool developers and Rating Providers. The task force presented to the RESNET Board a set of findings and recommendations.

The recommendations focused on:

- Enhanced Quality Assurance of Ratings
- Independence of Quality Assurance Designees
- Percentage of Rated Homes by a Rater that Must be Quality Reviewed Annually
- Clearer and Consistent Information and Training from RESNET to Quality Assurance Designees
- Home Energy Rating Software Program Improvements to Ensure Greater Consistency of HERS Index Scores

Based on the findings and recommendations of the task force the RESNET Board of Directors adopted a set of policies which are:

- RESNET certified Quality Assurance Designees must in the future:
    - Serve as agents of RESNET
    - Have neither a financial interest nor an employee/employer relationship with the entity performing the rating

- That the RENSET quality assurance standards maintain the current requirement of annual quality assurance review of raters consisting of 1% field reviews and 10% building file reviews with provisions through modification to the standard to add additional oversight of HERS Raters when errors are found in these reviews.

- RESNET incorporate changes to rating software standards that would include:
    - Establish limits on input variables for whole-house ventilations systems and other in the RESNET Standards
    - Determine bounds checks that can be incorporated into software to limit or warn users when input values are beyond reasonable limits
    - Enhance rating software tools to enable Quality Assurance Designee flags to be set for internal inconsistencies that should be checked prior to entering a building file into RESNET registry
    - Modify RESNET registry XML schema to include reporting of the Quality Assurance Designee flags to RESNET staff

RESNET Quality Improvement Task Force

The RESNET Board voted to create a task force composed of representatives of Rating Providers, Quality Assurance Designees, Rating Companies and homebuilders that would develop recommendations to the RESNET Board to implement the policies.

The RESNET Executive Committee subsequently adopted a policy that no board members nor standing committee members can serve on the task force. This was to ensure an independent analysis and review.

The task force, the RESNET Quality Improvement Task Force will be composed of two Rating Providers, two Quality Assurance Designees, two Rating Providers and two home builders. There will be two co-chairs of the task force – a builder and a Rating Provider.

The RESNET Quality Improvement Task Force will end with the submission of recommendations to the RESNET Board.

RESNET Quality Improvement Working Groups

There will be many technical issues in developing options for the recommendations for implementing the consistency policies. Because of this working groups be formed that would develop options and the pros and cons for each option. This will serve as the basis of the task force making its recommendations to the RESNET Board. Since the working groups will conduct technical analysis of options and not actually voting, members can be members of the RESNET Board and standing committees.

There will be two working groups:

- Independence of Quality Assurance Designees/additional reviews based on errors
- Software fixes

Each working group would have a minimum of ten members. The first working group would include two representatives of Rating Providers, Quality Assurance Designees, Rating Companies, home builders and Rating Sampling Providers. The second working group will be composed of include two representatives of Rating Providers, Quality Assurance Designees, Rating Companies, home builders and HERS software providers.

Transparency of Process

Since the changes that the board will adopt could have a dramatic effect on the rating industry it is critical that they be informed and have an opportunity to comment on each phase of the process.

The options and analysis of the working group be sent to the rating community to review and comment prior to being sent to the task force for consideration. This would allow members of the task force to have an additional source of information in making their recommendations.

Once the task force has made it recommendations, they would be sent to the rating community to review and comment on prior to be submitted to the RESNET Board. This would allow the board to have an additional source of information in making its decision.

This transparency process would also serve to educate the rating industry and establish a sense of ownership prior to the standard public review and comment process.

Consensus Process

A consensus development process be employed in the effort where there is a majority recommendations as well as minority opinions documented in each stage of the process.

Board Action

Armed with the analysis and recommendations the RESNET Board would then vote to adopt the procedures. Once the procedures are adopted they would be submitted back to the working groups to draft standard amendment language. This would be reviewed by the board and then voted on whether to be submitted to the RESENT standard amendment public review and comment process. The working group would be empowered to consider and document the consideration of every comment. Once this process is completed the RESNET Board would vote to adopt the amendments with an appropriate effective date to allow a smooth transition.