



# Business

## Foam Takes The Chill off Fuel Bills

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Robert Piccione Sr. and his son Bob, partners in Hygrade Insulation in Phillipsburg, can foam your cold weather worries away.

They sell and install what they claim is one of the best insulation materials on the market — UreaFormaldehyde, or "Keyfoam," made by Brekke Enterprises Inc. in Tacoma, Wash.

"Keyfoam" has an insulation rating of 5.5, which Brekke Enterprises claims is the highest rating for any commercial insulation. Fiberglass, another common



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insulation has a rating of 3.03. Keyfoam forms its own moisture seal. Fiberglass needs an additional strip of plastic or paper for a moisture seal.

Working out of Bob's 94 Bullman St. home, the Picciones can winterize your house in a day without changing its appearance.

In most houses, there's a gap or "cavity" between the outside wall and the inside covering. The Picciones punch small holes through the outer wall. Then they fill that inner cavity up with foam.

The Picciones carry the foam's ingredients in two 55-gallon drums on their truck. One drum holds formaldehyde, the other a foaming agent. After Robert Piccione Sr. punches the hole, his son takes a nozzle with hoses from both drums, and sprays the liquids which become foam just before they enter the wall.

After the foam fills the cavity, the Picciones repair the holes with plugs and wooden putty.

If the house has a brick facade, the Picciones drill through the mortar lines and fill the holes with cement. If the house has aluminum siding which they can replace, they take out a strip of siding, punch through the underlying wooden wall, and replace the siding with a new strip after they're done.

If the house has siding which has faded, and the Picciones can't match its color, they take down all the siding, drill through the wall and then put up the old siding intact.

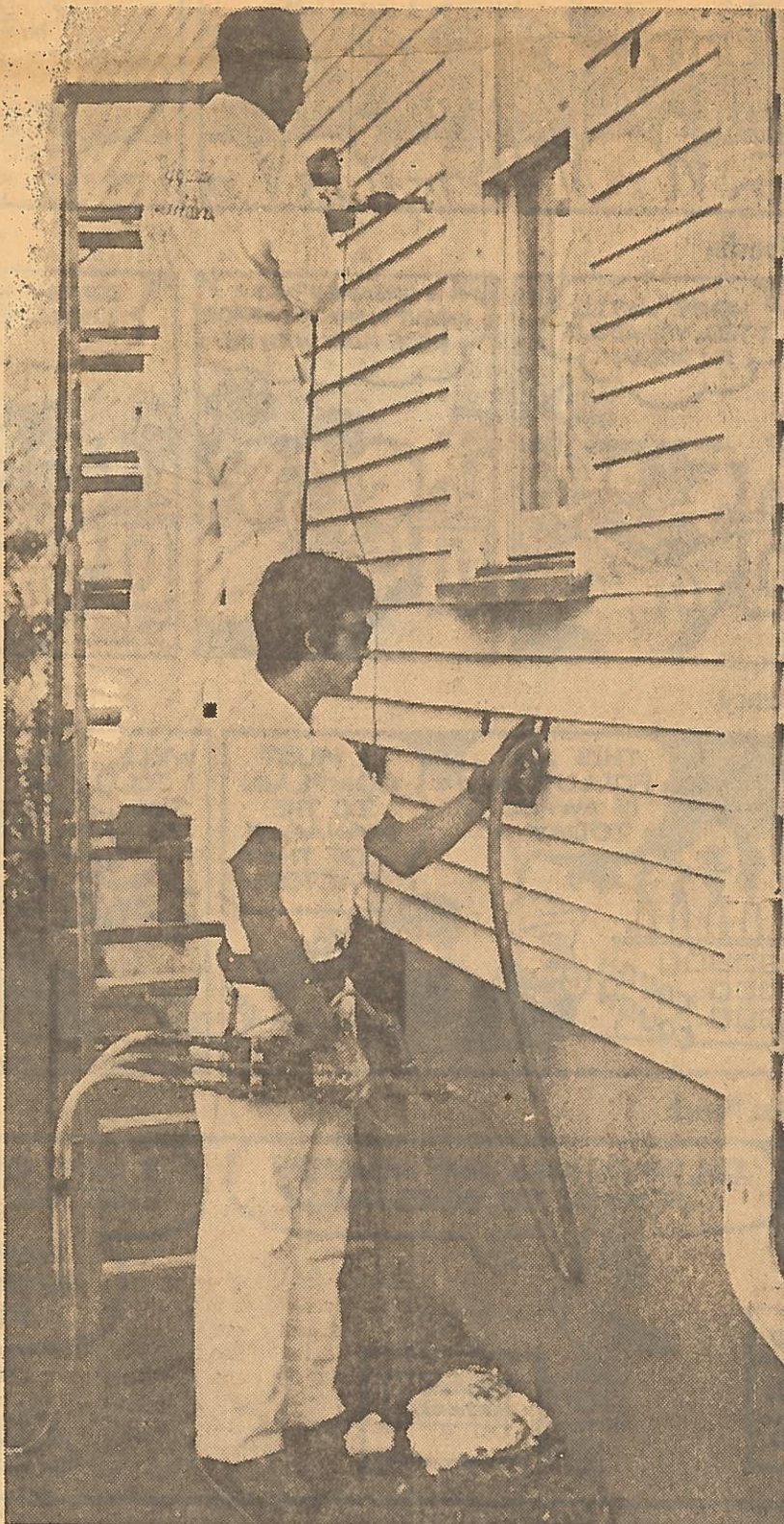
They say their work doesn't show. "One of our customers called us the day after we finished a section of his house," Robert Piccione Sr. recalled. "He didn't even realize we had been there."

The Picciones estimate it takes a whole day and all of both 55-gallon drums to insulate an average house. They usually charge about \$1,000. The homeowner sees the benefits in lower fuel bills.

"If we do the entire house and it was formerly uninsulated, we can save you up to 50 per cent of your fuel bills," Bob Piccione Jr. said. "It's an investment. You get it back in three or four years."

The Picciones have been selling insulation for only five months. An aluminum siding contractor for 18 years, Robert Piccione Sr. was in the hospital with a broken leg when his son started the insulation business.

"I thought he was crazy, to be frank about it," Piccione Sr. recalls. "I was in bed and he rushed into the hos-



**HOME ANTIFREEZE** — Robert Piccione Sr. drills the holes and his son, Robert Jr., sprays the insulation as the two partners in Phillipsburg's Hygrade Insulation winterize a home. Bob Jr. is feeding insulating foam into the cavity between the house's outer and inner walls. The Picciones estimate their insulation can save a homeowner up to 50-per cent on his fuel bills.

— Express photo by Ed Kostey Jr.

pital and said, 'Dad, we should go into insulation.'"

Crazy or not, Piccione Jr. went to Bekke Enterprises' school in Tacoma for a week to learn the theory and practice of insulating with foam. By May, the Picciones were selling and installing foam. To date they have done about 35 houses.

"We hope to do better next year, but that's not bad for a start," said Bob Piccione Jr. "And demand is picking up." In the last month, he and his father have worked almost round-the-clock, installing insulation by day and selling it to interested homeowners at night.

"People call us," said Robert Piccione Sr. "They see our ads in the paper or hear about us from word of mouth. We take kits to their places and demonstrate." The Picciones have worked both sides of the Delaware River, going as far north as Hackettstown and the Slate Belt.

The Picciones got their start from Presi-

dent Carter's energy program, which proposes a \$400 tax credit for homeowners who insulate their houses.

This fall, the Picciones and others in the insulation business are also benefiting from local banks' willingness to finance insulation work. First National Bank of Allentown, Phillipsburg National Bank & Trust and Lafayette Trust Bank of Easton all have pushed home insulation loans in the past month.