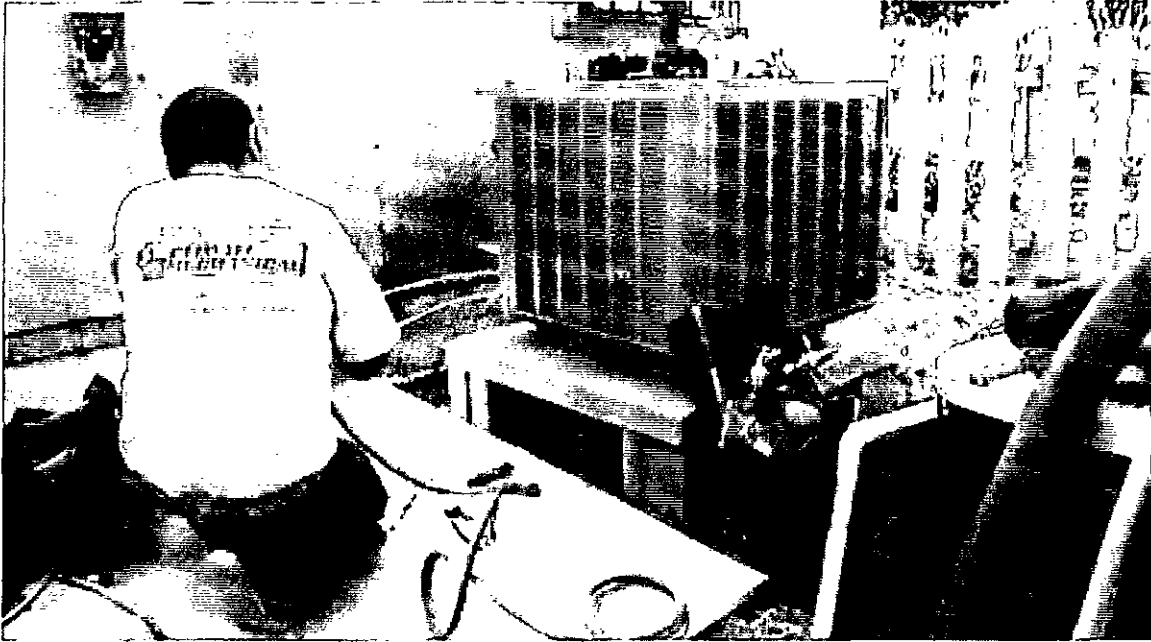


# KVUE NEWS -Stimulus dollars fuel free weatherization program



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AUSTIN -- Colder weather may be a relief for many coming out of this hot summer, but for the estimated 45,000 Austin people who live near the poverty line, it means tough times ahead.

Early Friday morning, it was all hands on deck at the Rubalcado household. For the past 20 years, the little blue house off Stassney lane has been a perfect fit for Adelina and Jose Rubalcado. Still, its age shows. "We had problems on and off with the air conditioner," said Adelina. "It was too hot in the summer, too cold in the winter. For the first time in their 65-year marriage, the couple couldn't afford

to replace anything. □□"Our motto when we first got married is 'We're not going to go into debt,'" added Rubalcado. □□Now, they won't have to. The Rubalcado's income qualified them for Austin's Energy's Free Weatherization Program. The cost for repairs comes from a slice of federal stimulus dollars. □□Since the program started, Austin Energy has spent \$8 million on 1,500 homes replacing their old, unwanted appliances with brand new energy efficient models, saving the family money and local businesses jobs. Contractors kept or added more than 50 jobs since the program started. □□Qualified homes get the necessary fixes from sealing air ducts, to adding attic insulation, to providing a brand new air conditioner and heater. □□"That new air conditioner it's beautiful," said Rubalcado. "I saw it out there, you know it's beautiful."□□Austin Energy is only able to use the federal dollars to weatherize homes through the end of this year. However, they tell KVUE due to overwhelming response, they are now looking to revamp a program of their own to continue helping those in low income housing.