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The continuing high prices of oil and the last two warm winters create a lot of frustration. These may be the two most important factors affecting the strength of our industry. Unfortunately, it is impossible for those of us at NORA to resolve either problem. However, instead of being frustrated, we need to always look at the product that we have to offer.

First, NORA is looking at some new technologies that could improve our offering to our consumers. There are two things that oil delivered to the home cannot do, the first is to generate electricity, and the second is to cool the home. NORA is looking at technologies that can deliver both. First, finding a way to generate electricity that can keep the unit operating in a power outage would be a great step forward. It would allow us to provide true security to our consumers.

The second item is an oil powered heat pump. A unit that would deliver heat through a heat pump process and deliver efficiencies well over 100. Similarly, that same technology could be used to provide air conditioning in the summer. This would allow us to satisfy consumers year round, and provide some great opportunities to sell oil in the summer.

The second major development for the industry is a better test procedure for our equipment. We know our equipment has been improving every year. However, the AFUE test procedure has been stagnant in the low 80's. Under a contract with NORA and NYSERDA, Brookhaven National Laboratory has been testing equipment under a scenario where they actually test the boiler or furnace and water heater as it delivers heat and hot water. This procedure finds that our equipment has been improving and is very good. NORA is now working to develop educational and field tools that will allow us to communicate these improvements to customers and to employees.

Thus, while the big world events are a negative, we are still moving forward. When it cools off, and the prices drop, we will be in great shape.