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Energy

Tinting offers energy savings

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By Kelley Chambers

OKLAHOMA CITY – Mike Malicott was tired of burning up each day when the sun lowered in the western sky, so the owner of Merle's Frame and Alignment in south Oklahoma City decided to try a commercial window film on the west side of his shop.

"When the sun starts coming in, the temperature in here comes up about 20 degrees," Malicott said. "We're hoping this will help with that."

Clayton Noon, window film installer with SmartView Window Solutions, installed a film on two windows and a door in a matter of minutes Monday, significantly cutting the glare in Malicott's showroom and hopefully starting him on a track to save money on his electric bill.

Commercial window tinting has been around for years, but several companies are targeting residential customers and smaller buildings with products that will reduce glare and ultraviolet rays without making home windows look like office buildings with reflective glass.

Greg Goodman, owner of Alta Mere in south Oklahoma City, decided to take his car-tinting business a step further when customers asked about tinting for their windows at home.

"In Oklahoma, a lot of people don't realize you can tint a home window just like you can tint a car window," he said. "People here just suffer through the heat."

Goodman tested the concept over the last two years for his store's parent company, Moran Industries Inc., to expand his offerings from car-window tinting to residential and commercial jobs. In the two-year trial run, Goodman found the two services would work best as separate businesses. He operates his franchise of SmartView in a portion of his south Oklahoma City Alta Mere shop. Since his initial experiment proved successful, franchises have opened in Illinois and Indiana.

Goodman offers window films priced from \$6 to \$10 a square foot. The \$6 product has a more reflective quality and is the choice of many commercial businesses. For homes, Goodman recommends a ceramic-based film that is virtually unnoticeable, but can reduce heat by 70 percent and block 99.9 percent of ultraviolet rays from the sun. Many of Goodman's customers wanted to make sure their windows would not be reflective when viewed from outdoors.

"The more money a customer is willing to spend, there's less change in the look of his window," Goodman said.

Alta Mere isn't the only tinting business in town. Scott Birdwell, owner of Changing Shades with operations in Oklahoma City and Tulsa, has been tinting business and residential windows for 15 years.

Birdwell prefers to use a metal product over the ceramic version.

"It's basically a sheet of metal you can see through," he said.

The film at Changing Shades runs \$5 to \$6 a square foot, and Birdwell said with the energy savings for homeowners and businesses, it can pay for itself every 15 months.

One of his early commercial jobs was to tint four buildings for Bob Moore at the Mile of Cars in Norman in 1995. When Birdwell checked on those buildings recently he found the original film still was intact. The dealerships also compared their energy bills before and after the film and estimate utility savings in excess of \$100,000 over the last 14 years.

Rogge Miller, with Guaranteed Watt Saver, a company that does third-party evaluations for energy efficiency in residential and commercial properties, said the film is a good product, but customers need to ask questions about the benefit and energy savings tinting will bring their home or business.

"We're a cooling climate in Oklahoma and anything we do on the east and west sides of a building are a good thing," Miller said. "We will dramatically cut down the amount of radiant energy coming through the window if we do that."

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