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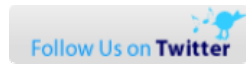
Wishing upon an ENERGY STAR september 2009 vol. 8, no. 1



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The ENERGY STAR water heater way benefiting the environment

BY KARA RODGERS

Suddenly, it's simple to identify energy efficient water heaters. Contractors and specifiers just have to keep an eye out for the familiar ENERGY STAR® logo.

Energy efficient water heaters have been available for quite some time, but it was the beginning of this year when the ENERGY STAR label for residential water heaters (which can be used for light commercial) came into effect. The ENERGY STAR logo makes highly efficient water heaters recognizable to consumers who value the financial and environmental benefits that energy efficiency can provide.

ENERGY STAR, a joint program of the U.S. Department of Energy (doe) and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (epa), has been around since 1992. It is a voluntary labeling program designed to identify and promote energy-efficient products to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. As such, it relies on manufacturers and energy experts working together to reduce air pollution through efficiency by bringing ENERGY STAR products to consumers.

ENERGY STAR qualified products save energy and money and are of the same caliber or even better quality than non-ENERGY STAR qualified products. According to the annual survey of ENERGY STAR brand awareness, three quarters of the consumers surveyed recognized the ENERGY STAR label and nearly two thirds of households surveyed associated the ENERGY STAR label with energy savings.

It is obvious why a homeowner would be interested in an ENERGY STAR water heater: water heating can account for 15 percent of a home's total energy bill — second only to cooling and heating your home. Doe estimates that the average consumer will spend \$360 to \$505 annually heating water, though this amount will vary depending on local utility rates and how individual homeowners use hot water. ENERGY STAR qualified water heaters are expected to save consumers from \$26 per year up to \$277 per year, depending on what kind of ENERGY STAR water heater is chosen. ENERGY STAR qualified water heaters could save end users across the nation approximately \$823 million in utility costs over the next five years. Plus, they could help to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 4.2 million tons over the same time period.

The ENERGY STAR program encompasses a wide variety of water heaters, giving homeowners a number of options. The conditions in individual homes can vary, so some water heaters may be ideal for some homes and not for others. Be sure to follow manufacturers' instructions when installing ENERGY STAR qualified water heaters, and make it a point to discuss what the installation will entail with homeowners before you start the job. A little bit of time spent with homeowners up front to make sure that they are buying the right ENERGY STAR water heater for their homes and habits is likely to leave both installers and homeowners more satisfied with the job.

Wholesalers and installers also have clear reasons to appreciate the ENERGY STAR program. Because it is so widely recognized by consumers, the new ENERGY STAR labels make it easy for a contractor to get a conversation started with a homeowner.

North West Climate Controls, Inc. is one of the HVAC contractors within Puget Sound Energy's (pse) service territory area in Washington State. Matt Painter, president of North West Climate Controls, has found ENERGY STAR qualified water heaters to be an important addition to the available water heater options.

"North West Climate Controls, Inc. believes that consumers have come to recognize and trust the ENERGY STAR label and seek to purchase equipment with the logo because of their knowledge of these products," commented Matt.

"Financial savings, in conjunction with tax credits, are a great incentive and motivator for a consumer to purchase new, energy savings appliances. Customer satisfaction is achieved in added comfort in the home, lower energy bills, and monetary credits and rebates being an additional bonus."

Some local utility companies offer incentives to installers who successfully install an ENERGY STAR qualified water heater for a consumer. Other utilities may offer rebates to consumers that could help plumbing and hvac professionals close the sale. Visit www.eswaterheaters.org to find a list of rebates offered by utility and state energy efficiency programs.

Being knowledgeable about the most recent industry changes, technological advancements, federal tax credits, and the ideal water heater for the end user's needs will position installers to become trusted experts in the customer's eyes.

Displaying ENERGY STAR water heaters in a showroom can also help the homeowner feel confident with the available options. As the survey data from the ENERGY STAR awareness survey indicates, consumers recognize and understand what the label represents. One of the hardest steps in the sales process — educating the customer — is made easier. The next step will be to help determine which type of ENERGY STAR water heater is right for that homeowner's unique situation.

Five categories of residential water heaters are eligible for the ENERGY STAR program, each with their own specific requirements to qualify. The Department of Energy established criteria that took effect January 1, 2009 for whole-home gas tankless, high-performance gas storage, residential gas condensing, drop-in or integrated heat pump and solar thermal ENERGY STAR qualified water heaters.





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Currently, whole home gas tankless and high-performance gas storage are the most widely available in the U.S. market.

Some ENERGY STAR qualified water heaters may be eligible for a federal income tax credit. For details on the availability of tax credits for ENERGY STAR water heaters and other energy efficiency measures, including which ENERGY STAR water heaters qualify for a U.S. federal tax credit, please visit www.energystar.gov/taxcredits.

After the launch of the ENERGY STAR program for water heaters, the Consortium for Energy Efficiency (CEE) has established the Coalition for ENERGY STAR Water Heaters. This campaign is dedicated to providing contractors and end users with the resources and education they need to select the most energy-efficient water heater to meet their individual needs. Coalition sponsors include energy efficiency program administrators and water heater manufacturers, in partnership with the U.S. Department of Energy and Natural Resources Canada.

To learn more about energy efficiency in water heaters, visit www.eswaterheaters.org.

Kara Rodgers is senior program manager for the Consortium for Energy Efficiency.



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