

Appliance Standards Awareness Project
Consumer Federation of America

February 15, 2017

Mr. Joseph Hagerman
U.S. Department of Energy
Building Technologies Program
Mailstop EE-5B
1000 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20585

RE: Docket Number EERE–2011–BT–STD–0043/RIN 1904–AC51: Direct Final Rule for Miscellaneous Refrigeration Products

Dear Mr. Hagerman:

This letter constitutes the comments of the Appliance Standards Awareness Project (ASAP) and the Consumer Federation of America (CFA) on the direct final rule (DFR) for miscellaneous refrigeration products (MREFs). 81 Fed. Reg. 75194 (October 28, 2016). We appreciate the opportunity to provide input to the Department.

We strongly support the DFR for MREFs because it is a win-win-win for industry, consumers, and the public interest. First, the DFR is not only based on a lengthy and thorough review of extensive data, but it is the result of a consensus among the manufacturers of the electricity-consuming equipment, utilities that sell the electricity that is consumed, regulatory experts, and public interest advocates. Second, the rule will result in substantial pocketbook savings. Indeed, the direct pocketbook savings vastly exceed the public health and environmental benefits, which alone could justify the rule. Third, the analysis follows the principles of a rigorous cost-benefit framework.

The MREF standards will both provide large energy savings for the nation and protect consumers from energy-wasteful products. DOE estimates that the standards will save 1.5 quads of energy over 30 years of sales and net savings of \$4.8-11.0 billion for consumers. DOE also estimates that the standards will decrease the energy use of MREFs over the same period by 58 percent relative to the no-new-standards case.¹

PROCESS

The standards in the DFR are consensus-based. The standards in the DFR are based on a recommendation from a working group representing diverse stakeholders including representatives of manufacturers, efficiency proponents, utilities, and DOE. As DOE notes in the DFR, the working group met in person during six sets of meetings between May 2015 and

¹ 81 Fed. Reg. 75197.

October 2015 and reached consensus on scope of coverage, definitions, test procedures, and energy conservation standards.²

CONSUMER POCKETBOOK SAVINGS

The MREF standards will provide large pocketbook savings for consumers. DOE estimates that with the new standards, consumers purchasing freestanding compact coolers, which are the most common product type,³ will save \$265 on average over the life of the product.⁴ Unlike conventional refrigerators, which have been subject to national efficiency standards since 1990, MREFs have not had to meet any national efficiency requirement. As a result, many current MREF products have very poor efficiency performance, resulting in significant energy waste and unnecessarily high electricity bills for consumers. For example, DOE estimates that the least-efficient 4 cu. ft. coolers use as much as 800 kWh per year,⁵ while a 4 cu. ft. refrigerator just meeting the current refrigerator standards uses only about 300 kWh per year.⁶ DOE found that the least-efficient MREFs on the market consume three times as much energy as is permitted by the California standards,⁷ and more than four times as much energy as that consumed by products just meeting the consensus standards in the DFR.⁸ The new standards will ensure a minimum level of efficiency performance for all MREFs and protect consumers against energy waste.

RIGOROUS COST-BENEFIT ANALYSIS

The proposed rule is based on rigorous cost-benefit analysis. A rigorous cost-benefit analysis must include both the benefits and the cost. For energy efficiency standards, in particular, which reduce energy consumption and lower energy bills, there are direct and substantial pocketbook benefits.⁹ DOE's analysis shows that the direct consumer pocketbook benefits are about four times greater than the costs.¹⁰ Thus, the MREF standards are well justified based on pocketbook savings alone. The public health and environmental benefits resulting from a reduction in harmful pollutants, which exceed the cost and therefore could justify the rule themselves, are "gravity."

² 81 Fed. Reg. 75201.

³ Technical Support Document. p. 9-3. DOE estimates that freestanding compact coolers represent 96.7% of all cooler shipments.

⁴ 81 Fed. Reg. 75196.

⁵ Technical Support Document. p. 7-3.

⁶ Based on the current standards for Product Class 13A (Compact all-refrigerators—automatic defrost). Note that MREFs are tested with a compartment temperature of 55 F, while refrigerators are tested at 39 F. If tested at 39 F, the measured energy use of MREFs would be even higher.

⁷ California adopted standards for wine chillers in 2002. The new MREF standards will preempt these California standards, as well as any other future state standards for MREFs.

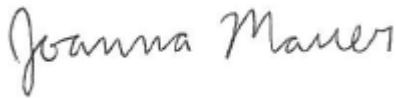
⁸ 81 Fed. Reg. 75213. Table IV.5. The standards in the DFR are equivalent to EL 7.

⁹ Comments of the Consumer Federation of America, In the Matter of Proposed Determination on the Appropriateness of the Model Year 2022-2025 Light-Duty Vehicle Greenhouse Gas Emissions Standards under the Midterm Evaluation, Before the Environmental Protection Agency, EPA-HQ-OAR-2015-0827, December 30, 2016, pp. 5-9.

¹⁰ 81 Fed. Reg. p. 75197. Table I.4.

The standards in the DFR are technologically feasible and economically justified. The comments submitted by China appear to suggest that the standards in the DFR are not technologically feasible and economically justified.¹¹ However, DOE's analysis for the DFR confirmed that the recommendation of the working group is both technologically feasible and economically justified.¹² DOE found that the maximum technologically feasible level for MREFs is significantly more stringent than the standards in the DFR.¹³ And as noted above, the standards for MREFs will provide significant savings for consumers. Further, the standards are supported by diverse manufacturers, including low-volume manufacturers,¹⁴ indicating that the economic impact on manufacturers is not unreasonable.

Sincerely,



Joanna Mauer
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Appliance Standards Awareness Project



Mel Hall-Crawford
Energy Projects Director
Consumer Federation of America

¹¹ <https://www.regulations.gov/document?D=EERE-2011-BT-STD-0043-0123>.

¹² 81 Fed. Reg. 75202.

¹³ 81 Fed. Reg. 75213. Table IV.5. The “max-tech” level represents 32% of the CEC-equivalent energy consumption, while the standards in the DFR (EL 7) represent 70% of the CEC-equivalent energy consumption.

¹⁴ See comments from Sub Zero Group supporting the DFR: <https://www.regulations.gov/document?D=EERE-2011-BT-STD-0043-0124>.