Dryer Standards Will Reduce Household Costs and Pollution—and Help Avoid Shrinking Clothes

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Clothes dryers are a major energy user in most homes. Even many new models use outdated technology that wastes energy and can even damage clothes. Recently finalized efficiency standards will bring all models up to meet the performance of their more efficient peers.

Standards match a joint recommendation from efficiency advocates and manufacturers.

The Department of Energy (DOE) finalized efficiency standards for new clothes dryers in February, meeting a legal deadline and adopting standard levels jointly recommended by appliance manufacturers and consumer, climate, and efficiency advocates.

The new standards will require standard electric and gas models to meet efficiency levels equivalent to those achieved by models that have an ENERGY STAR® label today. Each of the largest brands sells such models.

The standards will reduce energy use in some models by as much as 40%. They are set to cut annual bills by about $44 for households replacing a typical inefficient model—and cut carbon dioxide emissions by 57 million metric tons over 30 years of product sales.

Big energy users, often outdated technologies

Clothes dryers—whether electric or gas—are one of the biggest energy users in many homes. Today's least efficient electric models consume nearly a tenth of the average home's total electricity use.

Many models use older heating technology and do not optimize the timing of heating intensity. And when running a "normal" cycle that is supposed to stop when the clothes are dry, some models over-dry, DOE testing has shown, wasting significant amounts of energy and sometimes damaging the clothes.

Fortunately, manufacturers have incorporated changes in leading models that get the job done better using far less energy.

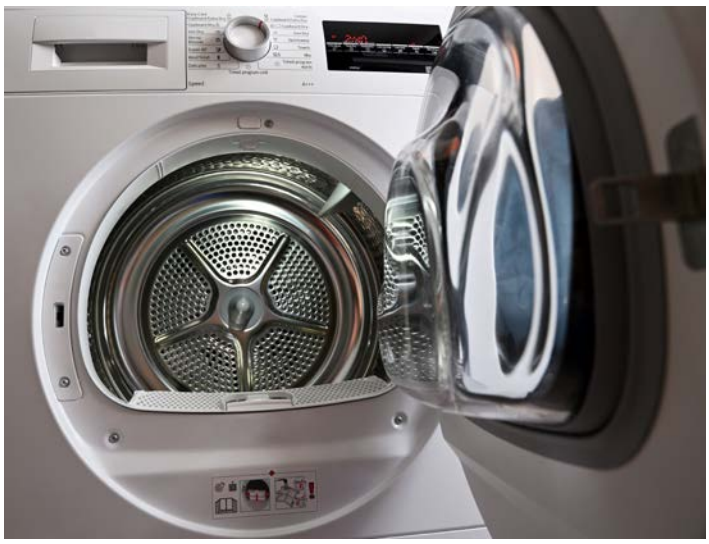
Better drying: fewer damaged or shrunk clothes

Over-drying clothes can shrink or otherwise damage them. The new standards will ensure that all models use sensors and programming that reduce or eliminate over-drying in "normal" cycles.

Models that already meet the new standards have proven themselves to be high performers. Over 90% of ENERGY STAR electric dryers tested by Consumer Reports achieve drying performance ratings of 4 or 5 (out of 5) in drying performance, while only about two-thirds of non-ENERGY STAR models achieve such ratings.

DOE's updated test procedure for dryers ensures that no manufacturer can sell a model that meets the new standards yet fails to adequately dry clothes. Each product will have to pass tests for both energy use and moisture removal on the same cycle, ensuring the test cannot be gamed.

DOE's testing found that dryers can meet the new standards without requiring longer cycle times than less-efficient models today. Manufacturers can continue to make models allowing consumers to choose a "more dry" cycle, as well as timed cycles, which can use more energy.



Lower bills, reduced pollution

The standards will reduce utility bills and overall costs to homeowners by ensuring all models are reasonably efficient.

They will particularly benefit renters—who often are unable to choose their own dryers—by ensuring that landlords buy efficient dryers. Renters are disproportionately low-income households.

The standards will reduce climate-warming emissions from power plants by reducing electricity use, while reducing direct pollution from the smaller share of models that use gas.

Stronger dryer standards were long overdue

DOE had last updated clothes dryer efficiency standards in 2011, and those standards were only a modest advance from ones set in the early 1990s. The department was required by law to finalize new standards (or determine that no update was beneficial) by 2019. The new standards will take effect in 2028.

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