

Efficiency Standards for Dishwashers

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The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) periodically updates dishwasher efficiency standards to ensure that all new units include proven technologies to reduce energy and water use. Testing has repeatedly shown that today's efficient models can clean dishes more effectively than their energy- and water-guzzling predecessors.

Dishwasher efficiency standards save consumers money and help protect the environment by reducing energy and water waste.

Congress established the first national dishwasher standards in a bipartisan law signed by President Reagan in 1987 and directed DOE to periodically review the standards and update them if warranted.

Strong, up-to-date standards ensure that innovative energy- and water-saving features are included in all models. DOE standards more than pay back any increase in upfront costs through lower utility bills.

Wirecutter has found that “modern dishwashers have never been better at removing grime” and that unclean dishes are usually attributable to detergents, improper loading, or failure to clean filters.

Today's models perform well

Dishwashers sold today meet efficiency standards set by the Obama administration's DOE in 2012. Those standards, supported by dishwasher manufacturers, took effect in 2013.

Independent testing by Consumer Reports and by Wirecutter has found that today's models generally perform better than their predecessors. They are also far quieter—and cost less to operate.

Trump action could have allowed wasteful models, though none were ever sold

In 2020, the DOE under President Trump finalized a rule that could have taken dishwasher efficiency backward. The rule created a separate “product class” for [dishwashers](#) that have a short cycle as the “normal” cycle. These models could have used unlimited energy and water because DOE never set a separate standard for them. Manufacturers [opposed](#) the loophole, and no manufacturer created a product exploiting it.

The rule was unneeded because nearly all dishwashers already have a quick cycle option. In 2021, DOE [undid](#) the loophole, ensuring that all new dishwashers continue to meet minimum standards.



New standards will take effect in 2027—and save consumers more money

New standards finalized by the Department of Energy this spring are at levels [jointly recommended](#) by appliance manufacturers and consumer, climate, and efficiency advocates. The standards will save consumers \$3 billion on utility bills and reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 9.5 million metric tons over 30 years of sales, DOE estimates.

The price of most of today's dishwashers is not expected to increase at all, because many models already meet the standards and most others can meet the standards through programming rather than physical modifications. DOE estimates that the price increase for standard-size dishwashers going from the lowest efficiency allowed today (which make up only 7% of current sales) to the minimum efficiency required under the new standards will be \$26, which will pay back in lower utility bills in under four years.

The strengthened standards will maintain cleaning performance

DOE's testing found that models that meet the new standards and provide very good cleaning performance are readily available on the market today.

Most models with five-star cleaning ratings from Consumer Reports already meet the new standards. In addition, the test procedure that will take effect with the new standards requires that dishwashers meet a cleaning performance threshold, ensuring that all models will be able to clean dishes well.



The standards will not have a substantial impact on the duration of a normal cycle, DOE found. Manufacturers will still be able to include a “short cycle” option, even though these sometimes use more energy.

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