

## How Appliance Efficiency Standards Benefit Consumers

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*Efficiency standards make energy- and water-saving features from top products available in all models, which saves households money and reduces pollution. The standards especially benefit low-income households.*

Efficiency standards ensure that new appliances and equipment for sale meet a minimum level of efficiency.

Congress enacted initial U.S. standards for a range of products through bipartisan laws in 1987, 1992, 2005, and 2007 and directed the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) to review and update each standard periodically to keep pace with evolving technology.

Today, [national standards](#) cover about 60 product categories, including common household products such as refrigerators, washing machines, light bulbs, and heating and air-conditioning equipment. Many states have additional efficiency standards. The standards concern energy efficiency, water efficiency, or both.

### Standards save households money

DOE sets standards that save more money than they cost, with efficient products more than paying back any increase in upfront prices through lower utility bills. Standards in effect today save the average American family [more than \\$500](#) each year on utility bills, and standards recently updated by the Biden administration are set to [add to these savings](#) in the coming years.

### Standards particularly benefit low-income households

The financial savings from efficiency standards are especially helpful for low-income households, which generally spend a larger share of their income on energy bills. High energy costs for these households are [correlated](#) with difficulty moving out of poverty, increased stress, and health risks and can force households to cut back on or even forego necessities such as food or medicine.

Low-income households are more likely than other households to be renters, who often are unable to choose their own appliances. Standards ensure that landlords buy reasonably efficient ones, benefiting these households.

### Standards expand consumers' access to efficient, modern technology

Innovations to improve energy efficiency generally become available in top-of-the-line products first. Standards ensure that all models include these innovations, including those at the lowest price points. In

In addition, most consumers lack the time and information to fully evaluate the impacts different appliance models will have on their utility bills. When replacing a water heater or other essential equipment in a pinch, for instance, efficiency is often not top of mind, and consumers are often stuck with the options that their contractor can get quickly. Standards help all consumers benefit from efficient technologies.

## Standards make products better

High-efficiency appliances often perform better than their less efficient counterparts. For example, among top-loading washing machines, more efficient models generally wash clothes more effectively, according to Consumer Reports testing. More efficient dryers reduce the risk of damage to clothes. And more efficient window air conditioners are generally quieter and provide more consistent temperatures.

## Standards reduce health risks and help protect the environment

Energy efficiency standards reduce harmful pollution from power plants and from within our homes. This includes air pollution that [increases risk](#) of respiratory diseases, cancer, heart attacks, and premature death. U.S. standards have been found to help prevent [1,900–4,400 deaths per year](#) from emissions of fine particulate matter. Standards also cut climate-warming pollution, such as carbon dioxide.

Standards that cut water waste as well as energy waste, such as for washing machines and dishwashers, are critical as large areas of the country face water-supply challenges.

## Keeping standards up to date ensures greater consumer benefits

DOE is required by law to periodically review each efficiency standard to determine if an update is economically justified. Keeping standards up to date ensures all consumers—regardless of where they live, their income, or whether they are a renter or homeowner—benefit from technological improvements that reduce their utility bills and harmful pollution.



*ASAP advocates for appliance, equipment, and lighting standards that cut planet-warming emissions and other air pollution, save water, and reduce economic and environmental burdens for low- and moderate-income households. ASAP's steering committee includes representatives from environmental and efficiency nonprofits, consumer groups, the utility sector, and state government.*



*The Consumer Federation of America is a national organization of more than 250 nonprofit consumer groups that was founded in 1968 to advance the consumer interest through research, advocacy, and education.*