

# Proposed Washing Machine Standards Would Cut Utility Bills and Climate Pollution

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*The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) recently proposed the first update to federal efficiency standards for residential clothes washers in more than a decade. Finalizing these standards would ensure new models waste less energy and water, saving money for their users and protecting the planet.*

Clothes washers on the market today vary widely in their efficiency, leaving many households with needlessly wasteful, costly machines. If finalized, standards recently proposed by DOE would ensure that manufacturers include top-performing technologies in all of their models, reducing consumers' utility bills and cutting water waste and planet-warming emissions.

The proposed standards would strengthen the separate efficiency requirements for top-loading and front-loading clothes washers. They would help reduce the gap in efficiency between top-loaders and front-loaders, which are generally more efficient.

The proposed standards would ensure that all models take advantage of proven efficiency improvements, such as using an impeller (or "wash plate") in place of an agitator, increasing spin speeds, using a more efficient motor, and reducing the amount of water consumed (hot water is a significant portion of washer energy usage). While some top-loaders today use impellers, others still use old-fashioned agitators that require more energy and water and generally don't clean clothes as well, Consumer Reports has found, and cause needless wear and tear on clothing, according to DOE. These outdated models also don't spin out rinse water as thoroughly, requiring a clothes dryer to run longer and use more energy.

DOE has not updated standards for clothes washers since 2012; under federal law, it was required to propose new standards by 2018, but it missed that deadline. If finalized, the new standards would take effect in 2027.



**Proposed standards would save U.S. consumers up to \$14.5 billion and avert 2.5 trillion gallons of water waste and 53 million metric tons of carbon dioxide emissions over 30 years of sales.**

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## SAVE CONSUMERS MONEY

Machines meeting DOE's proposed standards would pay back their higher upfront cost by reducing consumer water and energy bills. DOE estimates that the proposed standards would save U.S. consumers up to \$14.5 billion over 30 years of sales.

Stronger standards are particularly important to reduce utility costs for renters, who rarely get to choose their own clothes washers. Renters are disproportionately low-income households, and [DOE data](#) show that most renters have a clothes washer in their home, and it is much more likely to be a top-loading model. The proposed standards would help ensure that landlords buy efficient washers—whether they're top-loaders or front-loaders—for their rental units.

## CUT GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS AND WATER WASTE

For both top-loading and front-loading machines, improved clothes washer efficiency would reduce the significant energy—electricity or gas—used by water heaters and clothes dryers (since better-spun clothes dry faster). The proposed standards would cut 53 million metric tons of needless carbon dioxide emissions over 30 years of sales.

With much of the western United States in a water crisis, eliminating needless water waste is critical. Clothes washers currently account for 16% of households' indoor water use. Under DOE's proposal, top-loading washers would use 31% less water than units just meeting the current standard. Overall, the proposed standards would save 2.5 trillion gallons of water, which is equivalent to the amount of water in nearly 4 million Olympic-sized swimming pools.

## IMPROVE CLOTHES WASHING PERFORMANCE

DOE [testing](#) found that top-loading washers meeting the proposed standard can maintain good cleaning performance without increasing cycle time and that efficient top-loading washers reduce wear and tear on clothing in comparison to less efficient machines.