

Proposed Dishwasher Standards Would Cut Energy Waste and Maintain Performance

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The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) recently proposed the first update to energy and water efficiency standards for household dishwashers in more than a decade. The standards would ensure that all new dishwashers include simple changes to reduce energy and water use, helping reduce households' utility bills and protect the environment.

Dishwashers would use less energy and cost households less to run under standards recently proposed by DOE. The standards would bring less efficient new models up to the energy and water efficiency of their better-performing peers.

The new dishwasher standards would save consumers nearly \$3 billion on utility bills and reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 12.5 million metric tons over 30 years of sales, DOE estimates.

DOE's testing and analysis have shown that most dishwashers that don't yet meet the proposed standards could be modified to do so by making changes in their programming rather than physical design modifications.

The share of U.S. households with dishwashers has continued to increase while federal dishwasher standards have been strengthened. Over the past 20 years, the share of households with a dishwasher has increased from just over 50% to nearly 75%.

DOE's last update to efficiency standards for dishwashers was more than a decade ago, in 2012. DOE was legally mandated to propose updated standards, if warranted, by 2019.

EFFICIENT DISHWASHERS CAN CLEAN WELL

Dishwashers' water and energy use have decreased significantly over recent decades, thanks to federal standards and manufacturers' innovations, and cleaning performance has improved in the same period.

Consumer Reports expert reviewers state that today's dishwashers "do such a good job at cleaning that new features don't often change our test results much." Wirecutter has found that "most dishwashers can completely clean a big load of greasy, starchy, kind-of-crusty dishes as long as you use a decent detergent and rinse aid."

DOE's testing found that models that meet the proposed standard and provide good cleaning performance are readily available on the market today. Several of these models have five-star cleaning ratings from Consumer Reports. 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 proposed standards would not have a substantial impact on the duration of a normal cycle or other cycles offered, DOE found. The standards would apply to the normal cycle; manufacturers would still be able to include additional cycles, such as a “short cycle” option, even though these sometimes use more energy.

THE STANDARDS WOULD SAVE MONEY FOR CONSUMERS

Dishwashers meeting the proposed standards would quickly pay back any increase in upfront prices by reducing consumers’ water and energy bills. DOE estimated that the price increase for standard-size dishwashers going from the lowest efficiency allowed today to the proposed standard level would be just \$15. And the price of most of today’s dishwashers, including compact-size models, would not be expected to increase at all because they will not need physical modifications.



A dishwasher today



Likely appearance of a dishwasher meeting the proposed standard