

Myths and Facts: Showerhead Standards

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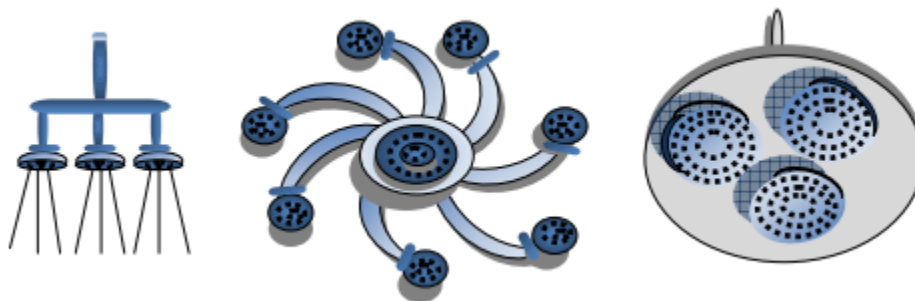
On April 9, President Trump signed an executive order (EO) directing the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) to revise showerhead rules he purported were overly restrictive, and to do so without notice and comment. On April 15, DOE published the final rule in the Federal Register. Many inaccurate statements have been made about the showerhead standards. Here we provide the facts.

Myth: Under President Biden, DOE restricted water flow in showerheads.

Fact: Congress set a water efficiency standard for showerheads in 1992. The standard has never been updated. No evidence has been presented that Biden removed a single product from the market.

In 1992, Congress set a water efficiency standard for showerheads specifying a maximum flow rate of 2.5 gallons per minute. DOE has never updated the standard. In response to some manufacturers introducing multi-nozzle showerheads designed to circumvent the law, DOE issued a regulatory definition in 2013 that made clear that a showerhead, regardless of how many individual nozzles it had, must meet the statutory standard. There are multi-nozzle showerheads on the market today (e.g., [this](#) Delta two-in-one showerhead) that meet the standard.

However, during the first Trump administration, DOE changed the definition of “showerhead” to allow products with multiple nozzles (such as those shown below) that, combined, could use more than 2.5 gallons per minute. Manufacturers opposed the definition change. Early in the Biden administration, DOE repealed the Trump definition rule, closing the loophole in the standard. The Biden action simply affirmed that just like any other showerhead, a showerhead with multiple nozzles must use no more than 2.5 gallons per minute. No evidence has emerged that any product on the market was affected by the Biden action; the only products at issue were unusual types sold more than a decade earlier.



Examples of three-nozzle “trident” and eight-nozzle “octopus” showerheads ([DOE](#)).

Myth: Efficiency standards for showerheads restrict water pressure.

Fact: The showerhead standards concern water flow, not water pressure.

The showerhead standards, which were set by Congress, regulate flow rate. There are no restrictions on the water pressure or spray force of a showerhead, nor have there ever been. Independent testing by [Consumer Reports](#) has found that “water flow really doesn’t predict performance.” Showerheads with the same flow rate may provide different water pressure sensations, due to product engineering choices impacting spray force.

Myth: Today’s showerheads are “weak” and water “barely comes out.”

Fact: There is wide availability of showerheads on the market that provide a powerful flow.

Testing by Consumer Reports and by [Wirecutter](#) has found that today’s showerhead models can provide a powerful flow and that weak showers are often attributable to the home’s plumbing, limescale buildup on the showerhead, or simply to an older or poorly designed showerhead.

Wirecutter says, “Any good showerhead is likely to be an upgrade over the one you inherited when you moved into your place, especially if it’s more than a decade old. Improvements to materials and engineering mean modern showerheads deliver a steady spray regardless of water pressure and make them much less prone to mineral buildup in the spray nozzles.” It says its top-rated showerhead, which uses less water than allowed under the federal standard with a flow rate of 1.75 gallons per minute, “soaks you like a summer downpour.”

Showerheads that consume at least 20% less water than permitted by the standard can qualify for EPA’s WaterSense label. These more efficient showerheads must also meet minimum requirements for spray force (akin to the water pressure bathers feel). There are more than 15,000 WaterSense-certified showerheads that all provide good spray force.

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