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Things to Consider Before Purchasing Your Next Home Appliance

Did you know...

Your home can cause twice the greenhouse gas emissions of a car?

That's according to the Energy Star® website (<http://www.energystar.gov/>).

What's Energy Star?

It's a product labeling program introduced in 1992 by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to help consumers identify energy-efficient products. At first, the focus was solely on computers and monitors. By 1995, it was expanded to not only include other office equipment, but also moved into the home, covering residential heating and cooling equipment.

In 1996, the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) partnered with EPA to expand Energy Star labeling to cover over 50 product categories, including major appliances, lighting, home electronics, and more. Last year, the EPA and DOE reported energy savings equivalent to what 27 million cars would produce in greenhouse gas emissions. The program also produced a cost savings for consumers of almost \$16 billion!

How does the Energy Star label save energy and money?

The EPA and DOE work closely with over one thousand manufacturers to determine the energy performance levels that must be met to earn the Energy Star label, which will then only be awarded to energy efficient products that offer both the features and performance consumers want at a reasonable payback if the initial purchase price is higher than other products in that category.

So, when purchasing appliances and electronic equipment, it makes dollars and sense to look for the Energy Star label. Keep in mind that electronic products have two prices: the take-home cost, and the cost to use it. Also, remember, a product labeled "Energy Efficient" is not the same as one labeled "Energy Star". It might be rated as energy efficient, but likely doesn't meet the other criteria set out by the Energy Star program.

What is the yellow and black EnergyGuide attached to some appliances?

The U.S. Federal Trade Commission (FTC) EnergyGuide is required to accompany many appliances, including air conditioners, refrigerators, dishwashers, clothes washers, and water heaters. It provides essential purchasing information about the product's energy use, including numbers measured against comparable products. It also estimates the typical annual energy usage of the product as measured in kilowatt-hours, and displays on a simple, easy-to-read bar scale how energy efficient the product is relative to similar models. Prominent at the bottom center of the label in a black square is a dollar amount. This number reflects the estimated annual cost to operate the product. Simply put, the lower the energy consumption number, the more cost efficient it will be to run it.

The EnergyGuide will frequently indicate whether products qualify for the Energy Star label. If so, consumers can expect that those products are 10 to 20% more energy efficient than others in their category, use 10 to 66% less water and/or energy than standard models, and save as much as 30% in relative cost.

What else to look for?

There have been many major advances in technologies. As modern appliances add features and become loaded with high-tech options, not only the take-home cost rises with each add on, but the cost of use rises as well. Before you buy the "bells and whistles", consider what features are most essential to you and calculate the additional energy costs.

Other technological advances have given us new energy-saving features, such as liquid crystal display (LCD) lighting for televisions (relative to the standard cathode ray TVs), which are more energy efficient than older models, and "delay start" features for dishwashers and washing machines, which can take advantage of lower priced hours under programs such as the ComEd RRTP Program.

Starting in November 2008, Energy Star will have more stringent requirements for televisions seeking the Energy Star label. TVs must have both standby and active modes. Expect that those sets will be up to 30% more energy efficient than others.

Other things to consider:

- Several Energy Star approved refrigerators use less energy than a continuously running 75 watt light bulb.
- Energy Star refrigerators save at least 15% more than non-qualified refrigerators that barely meet federal standards.
- Energy Star dishwashers can save up to 10% more than non-qualified dishwashers in energy operating costs each year.
- Energy Star TVs consume 3 watts or less when the TV is switched off, while non-qualified standard TVs consume as much as double that on average.

Technology is changing all the time along with the information on how to best utilize it. So when it's time for your next purchase, remember to do your homework. For your pocketbook. And for the betterment of our environment.

We hope this small guide has been useful. And we thank you for your continuing participation in the ComEd Residential Real-Time Pricing Program.

Thank you for sharing your energy-saving ideas! We are always happy to hear from RRTP Participants.

Sincerely,
Katie Papadimitriou
ComEd RRTP Program Manager
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