

Going Green With

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The Universe of ENERGY STAR

With all the talk of energy conservation lately, ENERGY STAR has become a household name. Many major household items carry ENERGY STAR rating labels including water heaters, freezers, washing machines, clothes dryers, home electronics, and lighting. Now there are ENERGY STAR builders- so the house itself could end up with an ENERGY STAR rating. But what is ENERGY STAR and why is it important?

ENERGY STAR is a joint program of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Department of Energy aimed at protecting the environment and saving money through energy efficient products and practices. The first ENERGY STAR product line consisting of personal computers and monitors was introduced by the EPA in 1992. In 1996, the EPA partnered with the DOE to further expand the list of qualified product categories. To date ENERGY STAR has partnered with over 15,000 organizations, and there are ENERGY STAR ratings available for over 60 categories of commercial and residential products and buildings. In 2008, ENERGY STAR helped Americans save enough energy to avoid the equivalent of greenhouse gas emissions from 29 million cars and reduced utility bills by \$19 billion.

ENERGY STAR products are not necessarily better than standard products, but they must meet stricter energy efficiency guidelines. For example, ENERGY STAR qualified refrigerators are at least 15% more efficient than the minimum federal efficiency standard, and qualified TVs consume less than 3 watts of electricity when switched off compared to 6 watts consumed by standard TVs. Appliances can be labeled "Energy Efficient" and have a low energy rating, but they may not meet the standards of ENERGY STAR. On average, appliances with the ENERGY STAR rating are 10-20% more efficient than non-rated models.

When you purchase an appliance always remember that the price to take it home is not the only price to consider. Also important is the amount that it is going to cost to use the appliance. Look at Federal Trade Commission's yellow and black EnergyGuide label on an appliance to see an estimate of the yearly expense to operate the appliance. When you consider the operating cost, it might actually be better to purchase a more expensive model that is going to save you money in operating costs over the long run.

In addition to energy efficiency, there may be tax credits and rebates available with purchasing ENERGY STAR qualified products. Some of the criteria for these tax credits are listed on ENERGY STAR's website. Also check with your local utilities to see if they offer any rebate programs.

Next time you purchase a major item, remember to think energy efficiency and shoot for the ENERGY STAR!

If you have questions or comments please send them to: askus@sciremc.com.

Sources

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