

# Energy Star: A Good Thing, but is it Kept on the “Down-Low”?



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# Energy Star Background



- Joint program of EPA and DOE to help save money and protect the environment through energy efficient products and practices.
- Focuses mostly on homeowners and businesses
- Partnerships with over 9,000 public and private organizations.
  - Includes manufacturers, home builders, home energy raters, utilities, even mortgage lenders.

# Energy Star Brand

- It qualifies products, homes, buildings, and services that are more energy efficient.
- Adorns over 50 product categories, 18,000 individual products, and more than 1,250 manufacturers.
- Identifies cost-effective solutions, providing quick paybacks for higher initial cost.
- No tradeoffs in performance or quality.



# The Energy Star Website




## PROTECT OUR ENVIRONMENT FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency • U.S. Department of Energy

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# Website Continued

- Easy to navigate.
- Constantly referred & linked to (i.e. think Lowe's or junk mail example)
- Very useful tools
  - Product calculators
  - Home improvement ideas
- Federal tax credit information
- No clear-cut, defined area for “education”, but the website itself simply EDUCATES.

# Educating the Public

- Website & hotline are the main tools.
- EPA's efforts to educate the public consist of:
  - 1) Making the link between E2 and air emissions
  - 2) Raising awareness
  - 3) Informing consumers of the “hidden price tag” – the cost of energy to operate that product over its lifetime.

# Training & Outreach

- 2003 Report by EPA

- EPA to provide training and template materials to their partners for use in their own E2 and outreach programs because it is.....

**“Particularly useful to those groups administering public dollars because it allows them to use their own funds to reach businesses and individuals in their regions, not to spend them on the creation of a a regional infrastructure for energy efficiency.”**

# Training & Outreach

What the heck did that last  
quote mean???

(My answer: Tax dollars are more effective in training the trainers than for EPA to actually be doing the training themselves!)

# Feedback from End-Users

- The good:

“Energy Star is really good about providing objective information...If you talk to a salesman, he’s going to try to sell you whatever he has in stock. But, Energy Star isn’t selling you anything- it’s just going to get you good, solid information.”

- *-Ed Pollitt, A.O.K. Auto Body Shop in Philadelphia*

# Feedback from End-Users

- The bad:

“I feel like EPA treats (Energy Star) like any other of their programs. They just provide pamphlets and brochures and never really help educate the end-user what it really means to go Energy Star and become more energy efficient.”

- *-Tom Gibson, Energy Consultant*

# Feedback from End-Users

- The ugly:

“I sell appliances for a living, and E Star is crap...Take into account that E Star rated appliances for ridiculous usage rates (12 loads a week for laundry) and you realize that E Star is a sham that is doing nothing but making appliance companies lots of money.”

- *-Porkchop, blog user on Lifehacker.com*

# Energy Star Benefits (from 2006)

- Prevented 37 million metric tons of greenhouse gas emissions
  - Equals annual emissions of 25 million vehicles.
- Saved more than 170 billion kWh or almost 5% of total 2006 electricity demand.
- Helped avoid over 35,000 megawatts of peak power; equal to 70 power plant generation.
- Saved Americans more than \$14 billion in utility costs.

# Conclusions

- Energy Star is an excellent program.
- EPA and DOE should focus more on educating the public firsthand.
- Education relegated to outreach partners
  - Maybe due to budget cuts in recent years?
- We must educate ourselves if we are to improve our energy efficiency and have a stronger economy.

# Thank You!

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