



At a Glance

Catalyst for Improving the Environment

Why We Did This Review

We initiated this evaluation to independently test ENERGY STAR products to determine whether their energy-efficient performance complied with the ENERGY STAR program's required specifications.

Background

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) established the ENERGY STAR Labeling Program as an innovative approach to environmental protection. More than 2,400 manufacturers and over 40,000 individual product models across 60 product categories are ENERGY STAR qualified. In 2007, EPA reported that the ENERGY STAR program helped Americans save 180 billion kilowatt-hours, about 5 percent of U.S. electricity demand, and prevented the emission of 40 million metric tons of carbon equivalents of greenhouse gases.

For further information, contact our Office of Congressional, Public Affairs and Management at (202) 566-2391.

To view the full report, click on the following link:
www.epa.gov/oig/reports/2010/20091130-10-P-0040.pdf

ENERGY STAR Program Integrity Can Be Enhanced Through Expanded Product Testing

What We Found

Almost all of the ENERGY STAR products in our test sample met, and in most cases exceeded, the program's performance standards. However, selected non-ENERGY STAR products performed comparably to, and in some cases better than, ENERGY STAR products. That level of product performance affects the ENERGY STAR label's image as a trusted national symbol for environmental protection through superior energy efficiency.

In addition, the performance results of ENERGY STAR and non-ENERGY STAR products call into question the assumptions used to calculate energy savings and greenhouse gas reductions attributed to this program. Without an enhanced testing program, including the testing of non-ENERGY STAR products, EPA cannot be certain ENERGY STAR products are the more energy-efficient and cost-effective choice for consumers.

What We Recommend

We recommend that EPA verify estimated energy savings and greenhouse gas reduction calculations using a market-based performance-testing program that includes testing non-ENERGY STAR products.

We also recommend that EPA revise the ENERGY STAR Website to include the established standard alongside qualifying product performance data and to provide a summary listing of the highest performers.

The Agency disagreed with our conclusions but concurred with both recommendations.