

Energy Star Label Saves Energy and Money

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Efficient energy use is one of the best ways to save money while saving the environment. In an effort to cut the national energy bill and reduce pollution and emissions of carbon dioxide (the gas most responsible for global warming), the Department of Energy and the Environmental Protection Agency created the Energy Star label for energy-efficient products. The Energy Star program is designed to make the public aware of how much energy is consumed by the products they use every day and how they can save money and help the environment simply by choosing one product over another. At the same time, since the label is an effective marketing tool, it provides manufacturers with an incentive to build energy-efficient products.

To bear the Energy Star label, a product must operate significantly more efficiently than its counterparts, while maintaining or improving performance. In fact, many energy-efficient products outperform their kilowatt-guzzling counterparts. The label first appeared in 1993 on personal computer equipment. Today, products displaying Energy Stars range from washing machines to commercial air conditioning systems, and even entire homes.

Energy Star products may cost the same as or slightly more than those that don't qualify for the label—but they cost less to use. Efficient products can reduce energy use by 30 to 50 percent. For example, many home and commercial appliances run 24 hours a day, seven days a week. If those appliances consume 30 percent less energy, the savings add up quickly. A typical household equipped with Energy Star products can reduce its yearly energy bills by about \$400.

Annual Home Energy Bill	
Average Home (\$1,294/year)	
Heating and Cooling	\$526
Appliances	488
Lighting	77
Other	193
Home Equipped with Energy Star Products (\$888/year)	
Heating and Cooling	\$271
Appliances	385
Lighting	39
Other	193
Savings: about \$400 (31%)	

And using Energy Star products can benefit the environment dramatically. The average home is responsible for considerable air pollution and carbon dioxide, since the energy it uses generally comes from power plants that burn fossil fuels, primarily coal. Installing Energy Star appliances in a single home can equal the pollution savings of taking a car off the road for seven years. If every household and business switched to Energy Star products, over the next 15 years the carbon dioxide reductions would be equivalent to taking 17 million cars off the road for each of those years. And the country would save \$100 billion in energy bills.

Energy Star products save energy in a host of ways. In addition to energy-efficient appliances, new homes that qualify for Energy Stars usually incorporate energy-efficient building designs such as daylighting, high-performance windows, superior insulation, and advanced duct sealing. Most furnaces lose a significant amount of heat out the flue or chimney. Instead of heating the outdoors, Energy Star furnaces capture more than 90 percent of available heat, making them both cleaner and less expensive to run.

Energy Star office equipment—computers, monitors, copiers, scanners, and fax machines—all "sleep" when not in use. They typically use half the electricity of similar products that don't merit the label. When turned off, Energy Star TVs and VCRs use as much as 75 percent less electricity for clock functions and "standby" modes than their conventional counterparts.

Even light fixtures can receive Energy Stars. Most of the electricity needed to light an incandescent or halogen bulb is wasted as heat. Energy Star fixtures use compact fluorescent light bulbs, which consume a fraction of the electricity of incandescent or halogen bulbs by turning nearly all the energy into light. And these light bulbs produce a soft,

pleasing glow, unlike the harsh light from earlier fluorescent tubes. (High quality compact fluorescent bulbs that screw into regular fixtures are available. While not part of the Energy Star program, these bulbs are also very efficient.) The Energy Star program has been a great success. In 1997 alone, these efficient products and building designs have kept more than 15 million tons of carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere. At the same time, these products saved businesses and consumers more than \$1 billion in energy costs.

The Energy Star program is receiving praise from industry, environmentalists, and lawmakers alike. According to Stan Harnetz, senior vice president of merchandising for Panasonic, "The Energy Star Program is a win-win situation for everyone. Not only does it encourage companies like ours to provide consumers with quality energy-efficient products, but it also protects the environment while encouraging sales." Vice President Gore called the program "a great example of government and business working together to improve energy efficiency, save consumers money, create new economic opportunities, and protect the environment."

A wide variety of Energy Star products is now available in stores across the country. Helping to clean the air and curb global warming can be as easy as reaching for the stars.

