

Helping customers choose the right water heater

When it comes to picking out a new water heater, your customers rely on you to help them choose the unit that's best for their needs. Going with an ENERGY STAR® water heater could be the right choice, helping

homeowners save energy and money. If you are educated on the types of ENERGY STAR water heaters available, you can then provide a valuable service to your customers, by helping them choose the right water heater and leaving them more

satisfied with the installation.

Now is the perfect time for homeowners to consider upgrading their older, standard water heater because of the numerous tax cuts and rebates on ENERGY STAR appliances. Customers may be eligible to receive a 30 percent tax credit on ENERGY STAR solar thermal water heating systems or a 30 percent credit up to \$1,500 on ENERGY STAR gas tankless and heat pump models. Commercial storage

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water heaters with Thermal Efficiency ratings greater than, or equal to, 90% are also eligible for this tax credit. As a part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, many states are also offering ENERGY STAR rebates.

A number of utility companies are offering additional rebates on ENERGY STAR models. Information about local utility rebates is available at the Coalition for ENERGY STAR Water Heaters web site at www.eswaterheaters.org. The Coalition for ENERGY STAR Water Heaters is a national awareness and education campaign managed by Consortium for Energy Efficiency. Manufacturers, industry associations, and energy efficiency program administrators sponsor the campaign to promote the benefits of ENERGY STAR water heaters.

Depending on where you live and how many of the federal, state and utility incentives are applicable, your customers may be able to pay back the additional cost of their new high efficiency water heaters in energy savings over a relatively short period of time — usually well within the life of the water heater.

Because of the focus on high efficiency, manufacturers are offering a variety of new types of higher performance water heaters. When you're informed about the increasing number of highly efficient options available for your customers, you can ensure that your wholesalers and distributors are making these products available to you.

As plumbers and contractors, your customers depend on you as their water heating expert. Being knowledgeable about the technologies and products available, particularly the ENERGY STAR options, allows you to help your customers make the right choice, providing them an invaluable service.

The first step in helping customers choose an efficient water heater is educating them on the benefits of ENERGY STAR models: energy and money savings. According to the Department of Energy (DOE), ENERGY STAR-qualified water heaters consume 7 to 55% less energy than standard models, saving a household \$20 to \$300 a year on utility bills, de-
(Turn to Choosing... page 58.)



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Choosing the right water heater

(Continued from page 56.)
pending on the unit.

There are currently four types of commercially available ENERGY STAR water heaters: high efficiency gas storage, whole-home gas tankless, electric heat pump, and solar thermal. By understanding the benefits and appropriate applications for

these different types of water heaters, you can help homeowners find the right models for their individual situations. As always, it is best to follow manufacturer installation instructions and guidelines, but here are some general considerations to help you guide your customers.

According to the DOE, high effi-

ciency gas storage water heaters offer a 7% reduction in water heating costs, making them a modest upgrade for a planned replacement. This is an ideal water heater to carry on the truck as an emergency replacement for homeowners with gas service available.

A whole-home gas tankless water heater is a great option for new construction or a remodel, offering

up to a 30% reduction in gas bills. Even more efficient, condensing tankless models are also available and provide additional energy savings. However, depending on the model and the home configuration, a gas tankless could require an increase in gas meter size and possibly an increase in line size to a customer's home. Because this may add to installation costs, it's important to familiarize yourself with the manufacturer's instructions.

Electric heat pump water heaters work well for a planned replacement or a remodel for customers who only have electric service available, offering a 55% reduction in water heating costs. Because these water heaters work by taking heat out of the air and putting it into the water, they function well in spaces that have extra heat or require dehumidification. As the heat pump water heater cools the air around it, humidity can also condense out of the air. As a result, these water heaters might require additional labor to accommodate a condensate drain. Again, it's important to familiarize yourself with the manufacturer installation instructions and recommendations.

Finally, if your customer is a proponent of renewable energy and is willing to put effort into maintenance, a solar thermal water heating system is a good option, offering up to a 50% reduction in water heating bills.

There are a variety of ENERGY STAR water heaters that can help many of your customers save energy and cut their water heating costs. Help them make a well-informed choice before they're faced with an emergency replacement. For more information on the benefits of these water heaters, visit www.eswaterheaters.org. Contact your local utility and water heater distributor for information on additional installation training, and check with your wholesaler to make sure they are stocking the latest in ENERGY STAR technology. ■

Kara Rodgers, Natural Gas Senior Program Manager, is responsible for guiding and growing CEE's Initiatives focused on natural gas savings. These programs include a Residential Heating Initiative, a Residential Water Heating Initiative, and the exploration of program opportunities for gas packaged unitary rooftop heating and cooling equipment, commercial boiler systems and commercial water heaters. Rodgers directs CEE's three-person natural gas team.

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