

EPA Program Includes Providers

Energy Conservation Recognition Effort Launches In March

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) officials recently announced that assisted living and skilled nursing facility buildings will be eligible for a new Energy Star program known as the Senior Care Benchmarking Program.

Energy Star is a joint effort of EPA and the Department of Energy that helps businesses save money and protect the environment through energy-efficient products and practices.

The program will launch on March 21, 2011, said Clark Reed, director of EPA's health care facilities division of the Energy Star program, on a recent Web conference call.

Skilled nursing and assisted living facilities can use the Portfolio

Manager—an energy benchmarking tool—under the program's new Senior Care category. Providers interested in creating an account in the Energy Star Portfolio Manager will need to know the year when the facility was built and have data on 12 consecutive months of utility bills for all fuel types used in the building. Providers that do not have this information can contact the utility provider.

The Senior Care program utilizes 12 different energy usage factors in its online tool to compute a rating

that ranges from 1 to 100. Communities earning a rating of 75 or higher will qualify to receive the Energy Star label.

Earning this recognition means that a building is among the top 25 percent of the most energy-efficient buildings.



On average, an Energy Star building typically reduces energy consumption by 35 percent, compared with its peers.

The Senior Care Portfolio Manager requires providers to input data into the following 12 categories: gross floor area (square feet), total number of units, average number of residents, total resident capacity, workers on main shift, number of personal computers, number of commercial refrigeration/freezer units, number of commercial washing machines, number of residential washing machines, number of residential electronic lift systems, percent heated, and percent cooled.

These inputs have been identified by EPA as the major drivers in energy use in long term care buildings.

Providers will also need to input energy usage.

Visit energystar.gov/benchmark to create a private account and begin entering data into Portfolio Manager. Check the box marked “other” category and choose “Health Care: Long Term Care (Nursing/Assisted Living).”

EPA encourages providers to consistently input monthly utility bills into the Portfolio Manager so that when Senior Care benchmarking launches on March 21, the values may be compared against other senior care buildings' average energy use. The system currently compares assisted living providers to the benchmark set for commercial buildings.

For more information, go to www.energystar.gov/istar/pmpam/.

To listen to EPA's announcement and explanation of the Senior Care Benchmark model, visit: <https://energystar.webex.com>, click “Recorded Sessions,” and then select “ENERGY STAR Senior Care Benchmark Update” from the list.

—Lisa Gelhaus

MetLife Exits LTC Insurance Market

Following an extensive review of its long term care insurance (LTCI) business, MetLife announced late last year that it will discontinue the sale of new LTCI coverage.

In addition, in 2011, MetLife will discontinue new enrollments into existing group and multi-life LTCI plans.

MetLife's decision to stop writing new LTCI business will have no impact on existing insureds' coverage, the company said in a statement. “As long as premiums are paid on time, coverage cannot be cancelled,” the state-

ment said. “All current insureds can continue to make coverage changes per the terms of their policy or certificate, including inflation protection offers and requests to increase or decrease coverage.”

Jodi Anatole, MetLife vice president of long term care products, noted that although the company's decision was a difficult one, “the financial challenges facing the LTCI industry in the current environment are well known.”

MetLife will explore combining LTCI with other products.

—Meg LaPorte