

Q & A: Clark Reed, Director, EPA's Healthcare Facilities Division

Clark Reed, Director of the Healthcare Facilities Division at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in Washington D.C., coordinates the agency's voluntary Energy Star program to improve energy efficiency and reduce air emissions in hospitals nationwide. Over the past five years, he has managed EPA's efforts to establish a national energy performance rating system for acute care hospitals and directed efforts to expand the system to medical office buildings. Reed serves on the steering committee of the Green Guide for Health Care, as well as the LEED Application Guide for Healthcare Core Committee of the U.S. Green Buildings Council. We spoke with him about how senior care providers can benefit from Energy Star initiatives and a collaborative opportunity for assisted living providers — including a special Energy Star rating system for assisted living facilities.

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(203) 846-6800 Fax (203) 846-8300

info@seniorlivingbusiness.com

www.seniorlivingbusiness.com

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Editor:	Jane E. Zarem
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What's the Energy Star Challenge? To help address global warming, EPA is running the Energy Star Challenge, a national campaign to encourage Americans to improve the energy efficiency of commercial buildings and manufacturing plants by 10% or more. EPA estimates that would save about \$20 billion and reduce greenhouse gas emissions equal to those from almost 30 million vehicles.

What approaches can senior care providers take? One of the most effective activities that providers can do is retro-commission their facilities to ensure that all the systems are functioning as they were intended when the buildings were originally designed. Evaluate the lighting, the heating and cooling equipment, the building envelope and the controls to be sure they're maintained properly. The **Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory** [a U.S. Dept. of Energy national laboratory operated by the **University of California**] found that proper maintenance can translate into energy savings of 5% to 15%.

Buying more efficient electrical appliances and heating and cooling devices is another good strategy. We make it easy by putting the Energy Star label on energy-efficient office machines, heating and cooling equipment, and kitchen appliances. Energy Star actually covers more than 50 different product categories right now.

Are certain items obvious ones to upgrade first? Lighting is typically a large percentage of a building's electrical load, so replacing incandescent lights with complex fluorescent lights — or switching what are called T-12 lamps with magnetic ballasts to more efficient T-8 lamps with electronic ballasts — is a good strategy. The fluorescent lighting that we have today is much better quality than it was 20 years ago.

Certainly, upgrade old, inefficient appliances or heating and cooling devices. Improved insulation can also make a big difference. And passive solar design is helpful, as well. Simple overhangs that block the sun at the height of the summer, but allow the warmth to come through in winter when the sun is lower on the horizon, can make a big difference.

What about payback? Retro-commissioning and upgrading the lighting are the low-hanging fruit in terms of a quick payback. Heating and cooling equipment tends

to have a longer payback. But by bundling various energy conservation measures together, organizations find that the bundled items often fall within a company's hurdle rate.

Often the first cost of Energy Star products is the same as non-qualified products; but even if the qualified products cost slightly more, the payback time is very reasonable. Over time, the savings range from 25% to 50% compared to non-Energy Star products. Payback on lighting upgrades is typically two to three years.

Given the profitability of senior care facilities over the past few years, a dollar saved in energy can go a long way toward the bottom line. For assisted living facilities with a 10% profit margin, every dollar saved in energy is \$10 dollars the organization doesn't have to make in revenue. Moreover, every dollar invested in an energy-efficient upgrade can produce between \$2 and \$3 in increased asset value.

Are EPA guidelines or checklists available? Tools and resources, including our Energy Star "Building Upgrade Manual," can be viewed or downloaded on our website (www.energystar.gov). □

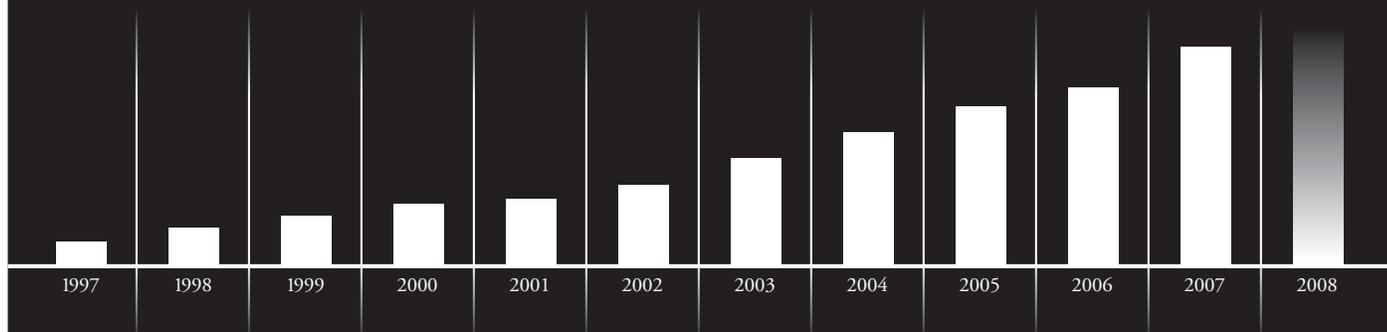
EPA's Assisted Living Energy Focus Initiative

Just as organizations may have an Energy Star-qualified appliance or piece of equipment, the Energy Star label is now found on the top energy-efficient buildings in the country. This fall, EPA is beginning an Assisted Living Energy Focus initiative to learn the needs of assisted living providers. "We'd like to learn the types of tools and resources that providers think are needed to help increase their energy savings," said Reed. "We'd also like to learn if providers are interested in collaborating with EPA to develop a specific Energy Star rating for assisted living facilities that would allow them to compare their energy performance with their peers across the country."

Energy Star will host a series of teleconferences beginning in October to discuss these issues. Any providers who are interested in joining the Assisted Living Energy Focus or would like further details, please contact Clark Reed at reed.clark@epa.gov.

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