Dear Partners,

Beginning on April 1, 2011, the ENERGY STAR for Homes Version 2.5 guidelines will become effective across the country. However, due to Florida's advanced energy code, homes in this state will be qualified for ENERGY STAR under a modified approach that is consistent with EPA's Interim Florida guidelines that took effect on June 1, 2009.

Under the current Interim Florida guidelines, to qualify for ENERGY STAR, homes permitted beginning on June 1, 2009 are required to either achieve a HERS Index of 77 or lower or to comply with the Florida Builder Option Package. In all cases, they must also satisfy the requirements of the ENERGY STAR Thermal Bypass Checklist.

To earn the label under Version 2.5 of the program, homes in Florida shall meet all of the following criteria:

- The home shall either achieve a HERS Index of 77 or lower or comply with the Florida Builder Option Package;
- All items on the Thermal Enclosure System Rater Checklist from Version 3 of the National Program shall be completed (i.e., the Rater must indicate whether each item must be corrected, whether the item is builder or Rater approved, or whether the item is not applicable to the home) and the home shall pass all requirements of 'Section 3: Fully-Aligned Air Barriers' and 'Section 5: Air Sealing'. Noncompliance with items in other sections of this Checklist shall not prevent homes from earning the label. Although the builder may assume responsibility for verifying a maximum of eight items on this Checklist under Version 3, this limit has been reduced to six (6) items for the two sections being enforced under Version 2.5, Sections 3 and 5;
- All items on the HVAC System Quality Installation Contractor Checklist, HVAC System Quality Installation Rater Checklist, and Water Management System Builder Checklist from Version 3 of the national program shall be completed. However, noncompliance with items will not prevent homes from earning the label.

Because Florida's energy code is anticipated to become more stringent beginning March 2012, EPA has developed more stringent Florida-specific guidelines for homes permitted after this date. These guidelines are available on the Florida ENERGY STAR Version 3 Website and will apply to homes in Florida with a permit date on or after January 1, 2012. The implementation schedule for the ENERGY STAR New Homes program in Florida is shown in Exhibit 1.

Exhibit 1: ENERGY STAR New Homes Implementation Schedule for Florida

Version # [1]	Applicable to Homes with the Following Permit Date [2]	Version Description
Florida Interim Guidelines	Before 04/01/2011	HERS Index ≤ HERS 77 or Florida Builder Option Package. Thermal Bypass Checklist enforced.
Version 2.5 [3]	04/01/2011 to 12/31/2011	HERS Index ≤ HERS 77 or Florida Builder Option Package. Air Barriers and Air Sealing sections of Thermal Enclosure System Rater Checklist enforced; all other checklists from Version 3 of the national program completed but not enforced.
Version 3 [4]	01/01/2012 to 06/30/2012	HERS Index ≤ HERS 77 or Florida Builder Option Package. All checklists from Version 3 of the national program completed & enforced.
Version 3.1	07/01/2012	Version 3.1 Florida ENERGY STAR Reference Design. All checklists from Version 3 of the national program completed & enforced.

1. All low-income projects financed through low-income housing agencies may earn the ENERGY STAR under the current Interim Florida guidelines until January 1, 2013 as long as the application for funding for those homes was received by the low-income housing agency before April 1, 2011 and the housing project includes at least one unit reserved for low-income tenants. If the application for funding is received between April 1, 2011 and December 31, 2011, then the homes must earn the ENERGY STAR under the FL Version 2.5 guidelines, and under the Version 3 guidelines if application for funding is received between January 1, 2012 and June 30, 2012. If the application for funding is received on or after July 1, 2012 then the homes must earn the ENERGY STAR under the Version 3.1 guidelines.

2. The Rater may define the 'permit date' as either the date that the permit was issued or the date of the contract on the home. In cases were permit or contract dates are not available, Providers have discretion to estimate permit dates based on other construction schedule factors. These assumptions should be both defensible and documented.

3. Homes can be qualified under the Version 2.5 guidelines in advance of the dates above at the discretion of builders and their raters. However, homes may not be qualified as Version 3 until January 1, 2012.
4. Where a utility or state sponsor is mandating or incentivizing early adoption of Version 3 in their area, EPA will allow the labeling of ENERGY STAR Version 3 prior to July 1, 2012 on a pilot program basis, provided that the sponsor meets certain requirements.

If you have any questions about this policy, please contact us at energystarhomes@energystar.gov

Regards,

The ENERGY STAR for New Homes Team