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Monday, June 5, 2006

Welcome to this Special Edition of the *Newsletter* focusing on the **New Guidelines for ENERGY STAR Qualified Homes**. This edition explains the new guidelines that are in effect for homes permitted on or after **July 1, 2006** in **most** locations.

Click on the headlines below for more information:

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- [How the New Guidelines Have Changed Since September 2005](#)
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Overview of the New Guidelines for ENERGY STAR Qualified Homes

In September 2005, EPA announced new guidelines for the ENERGY STAR Qualified Homes Program. The [new guidelines](#) will go into effect for homes permitted on or after July 1, 2006 in **most** locations. The guidelines do not apply in California, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, and Washington, where regional guidelines will continue to define ENERGY STAR qualified homes.

EPA introduced new guidelines for the ENERGY STAR Qualified Homes program to:

- Ensure that ENERGY STAR qualified homes continue to perform significantly better than code;
- Continue to offer the choice to qualify homes by either a performance path (a full HERS rating) or a prescriptive path (a Builder Option Package - or BOP);
- Ensure the presence of some ENERGY STAR qualified products and appliances in homes that earn the ENERGY STAR label; and
- Enhance the value of third-party verification through a new required inspection, called the Thermal Bypass Checklist.

Note that ENERGY STAR qualified homes using the performance path must now use the new HERS Index. For long-time partners, the new HERS Index may appear to be a little confusing at first since its logic is the reverse of the old HERS Score. With the new [HERS Index](#), homes with a *lower* value are most efficient. Under the HERS Index, a home that uses zero energy has a HERS Index of 0, and a home that is built to code earns a HERS Index of 100. Each 1 percent decrease in energy usage less than code results in a one point decrease in index below 100. *Thus, under the new system, lower is better.* For more information, please visit the [Residential Energy Services Network \(RESNET\) Web site](#).

The new performance path threshold now requires a maximum *HERS Index* of 80 in northern states, and 85 in southern states. This means that an ENERGY STAR qualified home will be at least 20% more efficient than code built homes in northern climates, and it will be at least 15% more efficient than code built homes in southern climates with additional savings from the Thermal Bypass Checklist and right-sizing of cooling equipment.

How the New Guidelines Have Changed Since September 2005

There have been a number of minor modifications to the guidelines for the ENERGY STAR Qualified New Homes program since the original announcement in September 2005. These are generally clarifications of a variety of technical issues, including:

- how to calculate outdoor design temperatures for system sizing
- when total duct leakage doesn't need to be calculated
- when active ventilation is required
- the inspection of rim joists and box sills on the Thermal Bypass Checklist,
- the requirement of common walls between dwelling units on the Thermal Bypass Checklist,
- and others.

Please view the [Summary of Changes](#) document on the ENERGY STAR Web site.

More Details on the Roll Out Dates

The new guidelines for the ENERGY STAR Qualified Homes program go into effect for homes permitted on or after **July 1, 2006**. The Thermal Bypass Checklist inspection will also be required at this time. However, for a period of six months, builders will not be denied the ENERGY STAR label due to non-compliance with requirements of this additional inspection. As of **January 1, 2007**, a home must pass the Thermal Bypass Inspection to earn the label.

For homes that were or will be permitted before July 1, 2006 or were enrolled in a utility rebate program by December 31, 2005, builders may continue to use the old ENERGY STAR guidelines. However, any home that earns the label as of **January 1, 2007** must be qualified using the new guidelines. As a result, if you do not anticipate that a home will be completed prior to year-end, you should plan to build to the new guidelines.

Your Next Steps

For more information on how the new guidelines will affect you, please take the following steps:

1. **Read** about the [new guidelines](#) on the ENERGY STAR Web site at www.energystar.gov/homes.
2. **Contact your home energy rater.** For a list of home energy raters in your area, please visit the [Partner Locator Tool](#).
3. **Contact an ENERGY STAR Account Manager** at energystarhomes@icfconsulting.com.
4. **Visit the Website** at www.energystar.gov/homes for more the most up-to-date information.

Need to Update Your Contact Information with ENERGY STAR?

Have you experienced any changes in staff or has your office recently moved? Simply visit the [ENERGY STAR Partner Resources Page](#) with your username and password and type in your new contact information.