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Mr. Richard Karney
Energy Star Program Manager
U.S. Department of Energy
Building Technologies Program
1000 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20585-0121

RE: Comments on Revised ENERGY STAR Qualifications for Clothes Washers

Dear Rich:

Maytag Corporation is a proud partner with the Department of Energy's (DOE) ENERGY STAR Program for home appliances, having joined as the first appliance manufacturing partner in 1997. The Maytag Neptune washer was the first high efficiency clothes washer to qualify for the ENERGY STAR label at the time. Since then, Maytag has cooperated with numerous public and private entities to promote energy efficiency through all of its qualifying products, especially clothes washers. In fact, Maytag partnered with the DOE on its groundbreaking study of energy and water use in Bern, Kansas and later in Boston, Massachusetts.

We are pleased to respond to DOE's request for public comment about its intention to increase energy efficiency and add a water factor to qualifying ENERGY STAR clothes washers. Maytag generally supports raising ENERGY STAR energy efficiency levels especially as minimum efficiency standards increase, as proscribed by the National Appliance Energy Conservation Act (NAECA). In addition, Maytag believes it is entirely appropriate for DOE's ENERGY STAR Program to consider adding a water factor to the qualifications for clothes washers. Since ENERGY STAR is widely recognized as the preeminent brand for energy efficient products, adding a water factor allows a logical extension of the brand to incorporate water efficiency. The combination of the two will provide consumers with an easily identifiable symbol for high efficiency home appliances. Maytag also supports the DOE's efforts to keep the entire ENERGY STAR jurisdiction for clothes washers within its responsibilities.

Consumer Preferences

Water use has become increasingly important as public groups grapple with water requirements for its citizens amidst expanding communities and limited supplies. No doubt, clothes washers are significant consumers of residential water, yet their efficacy depends on certain technical requirements being met to ensure that those using the machines are satisfied with their cleaning performance. Emphasis on water use should

not compromise quality or sanitary conditions, and we are generally concerned that ENERGY STAR decisions could lead to unintended consequences.

DOE's analysis fails to consider cleaning performance, which is the attribute most important to consumers. Granted, Maytag and other manufacturers produce and sell a wide variety of energy and water efficient models that effectively clean clothes. We are proud of the Maytag Neptune and its acceptance by consumers for its cleaning performance. However, we do not believe some new technologies effectively clean clothes and may even present unsanitary health concerns by not thoroughly rinsing clothes of detergents or dirt. Some "water efficient" solutions in the market actually use dirty water from the wash cycle, known as gray water, as rinse water.

While we understand that ENERGY STAR does not incorporate cleaning performance in its criteria for qualification, it should recognize that decisions to raise energy and water efficiency can result in wash technologies that may present public health concerns. If clothes washers perform an inadequate job either cleaning or rinsing clothes, consumers could decide to run their clothes through a second cycle, which would be eerily reminiscent of low-water toilets. What have we accomplished if, in proposing low-water use qualifications, consumers actually end up using more water than before? The ENERGY STAR brand image could suffer if consumers are dissatisfied with the performance of these products.

DOE Analysis

We recognize that some interested parties would prefer that top-loading clothes washers disappear from the market. Consumers have expressed an overwhelming buying preference for these machines, especially since tub capacity and price issues remain real concerns for now. It is conceivable that front-loaders or some other high efficiency machines may meet with consumers wide approval, but the appliance industry has not completely satisfied consumers with new technologies given that, according to new AHAM data, 80-85% of clothes washers sold are top-loading.

DOE's analysis relies too heavily on numbers of models that do not reflect marketplace behavior. Decisions on ENERGY STAR levels should be based on real consumer and marketplace impact rather than artificial assumptions. Dramatic or stringent qualifications could prove extremely costly to manufacturers given already invested capital, especially if the changes do not take into account consumer activity.

Also, it's not clear that the analysis accounts for variations in models based on superficial characteristics, such as color, that have no impact on performance. Given the number of models that are identified as currently meeting a Modified Energy Factor (MEF) of 1.42 and a Water Factor (WF) of 9.5, one could presume that there are over 10 models per manufacturer that meet those requirements. The number of models will conservatively be cut in half and, most likely, by more.

Raising ENERGY STAR qualifications by 25% over future NAECA standards is too arbitrary and does not reflect marketplace impact. The number of models sold would be a more appropriate indicator of the levels to which ENERGY STAR should aspire. Since ENERGY STAR has typically sought to reach 25 – 30% of a product class' sales, ENERGY STAR should understand its position with clothes washers sales today (see AHAM data) and analyze how those numbers may be affected in the future with increased standards, factoring in historical performance.

While Maytag does not believe that price of qualified products should be a primary factor in determining future ENERGY STAR levels, we would encourage the Program to evaluate how consumers would be impacted at the retail setting. We would again encourage ENERGY STAR to review data compiled by AHAM to analyze this issue.

ENERGY STAR Levels

Setting ENERGY STAR qualifications at or above 1.6 MEF and lower than 9.0 WF virtually eliminates top-loading agitator style clothes washers from the ENERGY STAR Program, according to AHAM data. These requirements would remove ENERGY STAR as a consideration for around 70% of consumers who are not interested in considering a front-load clothes washer. Is that an intended goal of the Program?

If so, **Maytag recommends that ENERGY STAR retain its practice of setting only one set of qualifications for the clothes washer category and suggests qualifying criteria at an MEF of 1.6 and a WF of 8.5.** Having multiple tiers and qualifications confuses consumers at the retail setting and can lead to problems in production. The requirements set should be simple and somewhat challenging to maintain the credibility of the ENERGY STAR Program. Maytag believes that even with the addition of a water factor, ENERGY STAR must retain its prominent brand presence as the preferred mark of high efficiency. Accommodating lesser performing product classes in a voluntary high performance program only dilutes the brand's effectiveness. We would only add, as mentioned earlier, that cleaning and sanitary concerns should not easily be dismissed.

In conclusion, Maytag supports ENERGY STAR's adoption of increased energy and water efficiency levels with due consideration of marketplace impact and program performance with consumers and ENERGY STAR partners. Thank you for this opportunity to comment and we look forward to working with you and your colleagues to strengthen the ENERGY STAR Program.

Sincerely,



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