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EPA Policies and Temporary Allowances for the ENERGY STAR and Indoor airPLUS New Construction Programs related to COVID-19

Temporary Allowance for Remote Visual Verification Expires on June 11, 2023

February 06, 2023

On January 30, 2023, President Biden announced that the national COVID emergency would be lifted on May 11, 2023. As a result, EPA's temporary allowance for the visual verification of ENERGY STAR and Indoor airPLUS checklist items to be performed remotely using audio/visual connections will expire on **June 11, 2023**. This is consistent with EPA's previous policy announcements

[stating that the temporary allowance would expire thirty \(30\) days after the Presidential Proclamation on Declaring a National Emergency Concerning the Novel Coronavirus Disease \(COVID-19\) Outbreak is lifted. After EPA's temporary allowance expires on June 11, 2023, completion of onsite diagnostic tests required to certify a home or apartment as ENERGY STAR and/or Indoor airPLUS can no longer be deferred to a later date.](#)

Temporary Allowance for Remote Visual Verification Extended; Prohibition on Use of Default Testing Values Re-Affirmed

December 08, 2020

EPA is extending its temporary allowance for the visual verification of ENERGY STAR and Indoor airPLUS checklist items to be performed remotely using audio/visual connections to **thirty (30) days** after the Presidential Proclamation on Declaring a National Emergency Concerning the Novel Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Outbreak is lifted, consistent with RESNET's already established policy. EPA is also re-affirming that the use of default values for airtightness and duct leakage testing is not permitted for the purposes of ENERGY STAR and Indoor airPLUS certification.

As previously noted in the April 27, 2020 policy announcement, completion of diagnostic tests can be deferred to a later date at the rater's discretion and in consultation with their builder, at which time the home can be certified as ENERGY STAR and/or Indoor airPLUS. In cases where onsite diagnostic testing is not performed, partners may wish to use the letters on our website to help explain to homebuyers that while their home has been independently verified to meet a majority of the requirements of the ENERGY STAR Residential New Construction

/sites/default/files/asset/document/energy%20star%20homeowner%20letter_1.pdf (PDF, 53 KB) and Indoor airPLUS </sites/default/files/asset/document/indoor%20airplus%20homeowner%20letter.pdf> (PDF, 68 KB) programs, due to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) situation, onsite diagnostic tests required by the programs have not yet been performed. Having these tests completed at a later date would be needed if they wish to obtain and ENERGY STAR (or Indoor airPLUS) label for their home. The use of these letters is entirely optional.

Temporary Allowance for Remote Visual Verification Extended through December 31, 2020; Prohibition on Use of Default Testing Values Re-Affirmed

August 31, 2020

EPA is extending its temporary allowance for the visual verification of ENERGY STAR and Indoor airPLUS checklist items to be performed remotely using audio/visual connections through **December 31, 2020** and re-affirming that the use of default values for airtightness and duct leakage testing is not permitted for the purposes of ENERGY STAR and Indoor airPLUS certification.

As previously noted in the April 27, 2020 policy announcement, completion of diagnostic tests can be deferred to a later date at the rater's discretion and in consultation with their builder, at which time the home can be certified as ENERGY STAR and/or Indoor airPLUS. In cases where onsite diagnostic testing is not performed, partners may wish to use the letters on our website to help explain to homebuyers that while their home has been independently verified to meet a majority of the requirements of the ENERGY STAR Residential New Construction

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Temporary Allowance for Remote Visual Verification for ENERGY STAR and Indoor airPLUS New Construction Programs Extended through September 30, 2020

June 22, 2020

In coordination with the latest policy from the Residential Energy Services Network (RESNET) [↗ <https://www.resnet.us/about/us/resnet-covid-19-updates/>](https://www.resnet.us/about/us/resnet-covid-19-updates/) related to the remote inspection of minimum-rated features, EPA is also extending its temporary allowance for the visual verification of ENERGY STAR checklist items (and Indoor airPLUS checklist items, as applicable) to be performed remotely using audio/visual connections through **September 30, 2020**.

The use of the allowance continues to be optional, subject to the discretion of the Rater's

Accredited Provider, and does not extend to required on-site diagnostic testing of infiltration, duct leakage, and ventilation.

When remote verification is used, Raters must ensure that documentation (e.g., photos or video screenshots) is collected according to RESNET's remote verification policy and provide a signed copy of RESNET's Interim Remote Verification Disclosure Form to the builder or developer. In addition, EPA recommends, but does not require, that Raters use a specific notation (e.g., 'R' for 'Remote') on the Rater Field Checklist for those items that have been verified remotely. Items that are verified remotely should continue to be identified as 'Rater-verified,' and Raters and their Provider maintain ultimate responsibility for the accuracy and quality of the inspection.

Additional information for the ENERGY STAR Multifamily High Rise (MFHR) Program:

EPA is also extending its allowance for the visual verification of ENERGY STAR MFHR items to be performed remotely using audio/visual connections through **September 30, 2020**. When remote verification is used, Licensed Professionals should follow the procedures identified above related to documentation, notation, and disclosure. EPA continues to require that the Licensed Professional oversee the on-site diagnostic testing such as infiltration, duct leakage, and ventilation.

The temporary allowance for remote visual verification for the ENERGY STAR Single-Family Home, Multifamily New Construction, Multifamily High Rise, and Indoor airPLUS programs may be revisited by EPA as necessary in light of market conditions.

EPA's Policy on the Use of Diagnostic Testing Defaults for the ENERGY STAR and Indoor airPLUS New Construction Programs

April 27, 2020

EPA is aware that RESNET recently adopted a temporary emergency standard amendment [↗ <https://www.resnet.us/wp-content/uploads/minhers-addendum-48i_webpost.pdf>](https://www.resnet.us/wp-content/uploads/minhers-addendum-48i_webpost.pdf) allowing the voluntary use of default values for airtightness and ducts leakage testing for HERS® Ratings. However, based on feedback gained through conversations with program stakeholders across the country, EPA has decided not to permit the use of

diagnostic testing defaults for the purposes of ENERGY STAR certification at this time. This policy also applies to homes seeking the Indoor airPLUS label, for which ENERGY STAR certification is a prerequisite.

While employing default values in place of onsite diagnostic test results may be appropriate in the context of a standard energy rating, EPA has concerns that the use of these values for ENERGY STAR certifications would compromise the promise of third-party verification that is integral to the ENERGY STAR label. Further, feedback from stakeholders, including Rating Providers, has not indicated a broad need for the use of defaults to certify homes at this time.

EPA wants to make clear to partners that this policy is not intended to compel or influence raters to perform onsite diagnostic testing at this time. Completion of these tests can be deferred to a later date at the rater's discretion, and in consultation with their builder, at which time the home can be certified as ENERGY STAR. We will continue to monitor market conditions and solicit partner feedback and will revisit this policy as needed. Our team remains committed to supporting our partners and making adjustments to program requirements, where necessary.

In cases where onsite diagnostic testing is not performed, partners may wish to use the letters on our website to help explain to homebuyers that while their home has been independently verified to meet a majority of the requirements of the ENERGY STAR Residential New Construction

/sites/default/files/asset/document/energy%20star%20homeowner%20letter_1.pdf (PDF, 53 KB) and Indoor airPLUS </sites/default/files/asset/document/indoor%20airplus%20homeowner%20letter.pdf> (PDF, 68 KB) programs, due to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) situation, onsite diagnostic tests required by the programs have not yet been performed and that having these tests completed at a later date would be needed if they wish to obtain an ENERGY STAR (or Indoor airPLUS) label for their home. The use of these letters is completely optional.

Temporary Allowance for Remote Visual Verification for ENERGY STAR and Indoor airPLUS New Construction Programs through June 30, 2020

April 1, 2020

We recognize that many of our partners and valued colleagues are experiencing tremendous hardship and uncertainty in these difficult times. The team at EPA is working to support our partners and make adjustments to program requirements, where necessary, in light of these unique challenges.

In coordination with policy from the Residential Energy Services Network (RESNET) [↗](#) related to remote inspection of minimum-rated features, EPA is allowing for the visual verification of ENERGY STAR checklist items (and Indoor airPLUS checklist items, as applicable) to be performed remotely using audio/visual connections. Note that this allowance is for optional use, subject to the discretion of the Rater's Accredited Provider, and does not extend to on-site diagnostic testing.

When remote verification is used, Raters must ensure that documentation (e.g., photos or video screenshots) is collected according to RESNET's remote verification policy and provide a signed copy of RESNET's Interim Remote Verification Disclosure Form to the builder or developer. In addition, EPA recommends, but does not require, that Raters use a specific notation (e.g., 'R' for 'Remote') on the Rater Field Checklist for those items that have been verified remotely. Items that are verified remotely should continue to be identified as 'Rater-verified,' and Raters and their Provider maintain ultimate responsibility for the accuracy and quality of the inspection.

EPA is aware that RESNET is developing an emergency amendment to the MINHERS Standards that would allow alternatives to be used in lieu of on-site diagnostic testing for HERS ratings. EPA is working closely with RESNET staff to determine the applicability of these alternatives to the ENERGY STAR program. At this time, EPA continues to require on-site diagnostic testing of infiltration, duct leakage, and ventilation by a rater or RFI for ENERGY STAR and Indoor airPLUS labeled homes.

[Additional information for the ENERGY STAR Multifamily High Rise \(MFHR\) Program:](#)

EPA is also allowing for the visual verification of ENERGY STAR MFHR items to be performed remotely using audio/visual connections. When remote verification is used, Licensed Professionals should follow the procedures identified above related to documentation, notation, and disclosure. EPA continues to require that the Licensed Professional oversee the on-site diagnostic testing such as infiltration, duct leakage, and ventilation.

The allowance for remote visual verification for the ENERGY STAR Single-Family Home, Multifamily New Construction, Multifamily High Rise, and Indoor airPLUS programs will be permitted for a period of 90 days ending June 30, 2020, but may be revisited by EPA as necessary in light of market conditions.

If you have any questions, please email us at energystarhomes@energystar.gov.

