



ENERGY STAR HPWH Webinar Questions Answered from Q&A Session

Question	Answer
<p>If market acceleration starts with consumer demand, and contractors will offer HPWH if homeowners ask for them... then why do so many HPWH incentive programs direct such tiny fractions of their budgets to marketing?</p>	<p>Responded to by Sean Dooley: I can't speak for all utilities as budgets vary from utility to utility. I think the focus should be on how you market and spending those funds wisely. Try to find what works in your specific territories. What time/day of the week works best for emails? What drives the most clicks to websites? Are there any local community organizations you can partner with to further promote your program?</p>
<p>Someone mentioned heat pump installers promoting HPWHs. Is it common for MY heat pump installers to have plumbers on staff, or do they recommend other companies?</p>	<p>Responded to by Crystal Nispuruk: In our area (the PNW) Oregon specifically offers a limited plumbers license. I do know that NEEA is working with other States to see if this can be extended. I have heard of HVAC contractors hiring a plumber on staff or partnering with a plumber to subcontract out installs.</p>
<p>Thoughts on providing plumbers/installers with an additional incentive for recommending HPWHs?</p>	<p>Responded to by Crystal Nispuruk: This has been tried many times over the years. This is a good strategy IF the additional incentive is based on a timeline/date and not on a budget/while funding last. Budgets are unpredictable and often we find that installers may extend some of that incentive to the end user and if it is based on budget the incentive could be fully exhausted. Also, if you offer an installer spiff make it easy to obtain.</p>
<p>I was struck by how Efficiency Maine lists their participating contractors in order of the volume of projects they've installed, rather than randomly as many program administrators do, as a reward for those who have really embraced the technology. Does NYSEG or RG&E do this, or has this been considered?</p>	<p>Responded to by Sean Dooley: This is something we are working on now. We will have a different weighting system that also accounts for the quality of installation as well as volume of projects. Each participating contractor will be assigned a gold, silver, bronze or no badge on our customer facing find a contractor tool.</p>

<p>I know you mentioned Trade Ally List etc., but one of the largest issues I faced while completing some HPWH installs was finding experienced / knowledgeable installers (this is in BC, Canada). From that you get poor quality installations. If you get an inexperienced installer you can end up with poor customer satisfaction (loud, cold area, running out of hot water, etc.), which will hurt demand. I know these issues are regional, but I found installer knowledge of HPWHs is the biggest issue we have here in BC.</p>	<p>Responded to by Nate Jutras: ENERGY STAR (US) is working in coordination with utility partners, manufacturers, states, the US Department of Energy, and a variety of trade-oriented programs to meet this challenge. It won't happen overnight but we're making progress. I'm not currently up to date on efforts being made on the Canadian side, however.</p> <p>Responded to by Sean Dooley: We thoroughly vet each participating contractor in our network. We also hold biweekly QA/QC meetings to ensure all contractors are representing the program in the best way possible. Work on providing as much training and education offerings to your contractor base as possible. We have seen a lot of interest from our participating contractors in our training opportunities.</p> <p>Responded to by Crystal Nispuruk: partner with distributors/ manufacturers/ and the manufacturers reps, identify contractors and get them trained in the technology, incentives and installs- then have them on your trade ally list a HPWH installer. I suggest vetting each installer on the Trade Ally list and not listing them for products they are not well-versed in. Also provide homeowner education, provide leave behinds with installers. There are a lot of resources from ESTAR, NEEA, and the manufacturers to educate and increase customer satisfaction.</p>
<p>Someone mentioned multifamily. Where are the HPWHs installed in a MF building? In the basement, in each apartment, or somewhere else?</p>	<p>Responded to by Nate Jutras: Hot water in multifamily is provided both in unit but also through a central water heater. It varies building by building and perhaps region by region. Please look out for future session in 2025 in which we address the challenge of retrofitting buildings with large central heat pump water heaters.</p>
<p>In areas without much consumer demand and longstanding HPWH programs, would a new HPWH program need to offer incentives to distributors to carry inventory?</p>	<p>Responded to by Crystal Nispuruk: From my experience distributors will carry what the market demands. If utilities, homeowners and contractors were requesting a product we do not have, if it happens enough times, we bring it in. But really you should meet with distribution beforehand and let them know your goals and partner together to run a successful program. To start you just need one distributor and eventually more will follow.</p> <p>Responded to by Sean Dooley: Adding on to Crystals response, which is what we saw firsthand when we launched our midstream program. We do offer a \$50 contractor bonus and \$50 distributor bonus per HPWH as well.</p>

<p>To add, are there effective ways to engage distributors in absence of incentives in areas where consumer demand is relatively low?</p>	<p>Responded to by Crystal Nispuruk: Even without incentives the utility could drive demand for a product. There are many other advantages to getting a HPWH, point to them and encourage your customers to buy. I am a true believer in asking the end user to buy! You can also lean on the IRA or federal credits.</p> <p>Responded to by Sean Dooley: In person and virtual trainings have been and continue to be an effective means of engagement on the installer/distributor level. Targeted email offerings and in-store marketing for HPWHs have also helped increase customer awareness on our offerings. We work closely with local community organizations as well and meet on a monthly cadence.</p>
<p>From rebates the utility can tell you the main installers in the area, or manufacturers / distributors can tell you who's buying their HPWHs in the area.</p>	<p>Responded to by Sean Dooley: Don't be afraid to reach out to your utility program administrators and see what can and cannot be shared. Everyone can benefit from increased demand and growing the installer base in each region.</p>
<p>Has RG&E or NYSEG used customer testimonials or case studies in its print or other marketing? If so, have they found these to be effective?</p>	<p>Responded to by Sean Dooley: This is something we are working toward in 2025. We have seen success from other utilities in NY.</p>
<p>We're looking to capture more emergency replacement scenarios through our program...Are you finding permitting a barrier to emergency replacement? and/or the circuit installation a barrier to emergency replacement to a HPWH?</p>	<p>Responded to by Sean Dooley: Promoting HPWHs to installers, distributors and customers are the best ways to raise awareness in emergency situations. That way, when an emergency situation does arise, the customer and/or installer is aware of what other options are available.</p> <p>Responded to by Crystal Nispuruk: Currently the barrier I see for emergency replacements is not offering the homeowner the HPWH at all. Plumbers always ask what is your current model # and then they replace it for a like for like. Electric to HPWH would be the easiest replacement and a great starting place.</p>