

Dishwasher Standards Will Cut Energy Waste and Maintain Performance

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The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) recently finalized the first update to energy and water efficiency standards for household dishwashers in more than a decade. The updated standards—supported by manufacturers—will ensure that all new units include simple changes to reduce energy and water use, helping reduce households’ utility bills and protect the environment.

Newly strengthened standards for dishwashers will bring less efficient new models up to the energy and water efficiency of their better-performing peers. DOE finalized the standards at levels [jointly recommended](#) by appliance manufacturers and consumer, climate, and efficiency advocates.

Each of the largest manufacturers makes models that already meet these standards. DOE’s testing and analysis have shown that most dishwashers that don’t yet meet the standards could be modified to do so by making changes in their programming rather than physical design modifications.

DOE had last updated efficiency standards for dishwashers more than a decade ago, in 2012. DOE was legally mandated to finalize updated standards, if warranted, by 2021.

The standards will save consumers \$3 billion on utility bills and reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 9.5 million metric tons over 30 years of sales, DOE estimates.

Efficient dishwashers can clean well

Dishwashers’ water and energy use have decreased significantly over recent decades, thanks to federal standards and manufacturers’ innovations, and cleaning performance has improved in the same period.

Consumer Reports’ expert reviewers state that today’s dishwashers “do such a good job at cleaning that new features don’t often change our test results much.” Wirecutter has found that “most dishwashers can completely clean a big load of greasy, starchy, kind-of-crusty dishes as long as you use a decent detergent and rinse aid.”

DOE’s testing found that models that meet the new standards and provide good cleaning performance are readily available on the market today. At least half of models with five-star cleaning ratings from Consumer Reports already meet the new standards. In addition, the test procedure that will take effect with the new standards requires that dishwashers meet a cleaning performance threshold, ensuring that all models will be able to clean dishes well.

The standards will not have a substantial impact on the duration of a normal cycle, DOE found. The standards will apply to the normal cycle; manufacturers will still be able to include additional cycles, such as a “short cycle” option, even though these sometimes use more energy.



The standards will save money for consumers

Dishwashers meeting the new standards will quickly pay back any increase in upfront prices by reducing consumers' water and energy bills. DOE estimated that the price increase for standard-size dishwashers going from the lowest efficiency allowed today (which make up only 7% of current sales) to the minimum efficiency required under the new standards will be \$26, which will pay back in lower utility bills in under four years. And the price of most of today's dishwashers, including compact-size models, is not expected to increase at all because they will not need physical modifications; users of these models will see utility savings at no cost.



A dishwasher today



Likely appearance of a dishwasher meeting the new standards

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