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February 11, 2008

Ms. Katharine Kaplan
ENERGY STAR Product Manager
Consumer Electronics and Office Equipment
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20460

Re: ENERGY STAR[®] Program Requirements for Set-top Boxes

Dear Ms. Kaplan:

On behalf of the National Cable & Telecommunications Association (“NCTA”), I am responding to the request by the Environmental Protection Agency (“EPA”) for comments from industry stakeholders on the ENERGY STAR[®] Program Requirements for Set-top Boxes. NCTA is the principal trade association for the U.S. cable television industry, representing cable operators serving more than 90 percent of the nation's cable television households, more than 200 cable program networks, and suppliers of equipment, including set-top boxes, and services to the cable industry.

NCTA supports a voluntary federal program designed to promote the manufacture and use of more energy-efficient set-top boxes and welcomes the opportunity to submit the attached detailed comments and recommendations on the latest versions of the ENERGY STAR[®] Program Requirements documents to the EPA in an effort to assist in the ongoing development of the program.¹ Our comments and recommendations in spreadsheet format (attached) address a number of areas, including the following:

¹ ENERGY STAR[®] Program Requirements for Cable, Satellite, and Telecom Service Providers, Partner Commitments, Draft 3 – Version 1.0, January 14, 2008, and ENERGY STAR[®] Program Requirements for Set-top Boxes, Draft 3 Version 2.0, January 14, 2008.

Base Functionality Allowance

In our last set of comments we discussed the importance of DOCSIS technology as an integral component in cable digital set-top boxes.² We suggested that the energy consumption of DOCSIS tuners, receivers and transmitters should be included under “Additional Functionalities Allowance.” Based on our discussions at recent Stakeholder meetings and upon further review with our members, we feel a more appropriate approach now would be to modify the Base Functionality Annual Energy Allowance for cable to provide the necessary energy allowance for the out-of-band tuner technologies used in digital set-top boxes. These technologies include DOCSIS, ANSI/SCTE-55-1 2002 or ANSI/SCTE-55-2 2002. We have offered our recommendation as to how this base annual energy allowance and other sections of the requirements should be revised to account for this critical set-top box component. We understand that a concern has been expressed that an allowance for out-of-band tuners needs to be constrained in some way. We believe our recommendation addresses this concern.

Gateway Allowance

Pursuant to discussions at recent Stakeholder meetings, we support the idea of moving the Gateway device from an additional functionality to a base functionality. We also feel this set-top type should be granted additional energy allowances based upon the functionality it provides to consumers (e.g., video, voice, or data).³ Moreover, we believe any allowances pertaining to the Gateway device should apply to all service providers.⁴

Home Network Interface

As currently defined, we do not feel the Gateway and Thin Client/Remote STB recognize the many other ways cable digital set-top boxes will be used in a home networks using a variety of interfaces. For example, when connecting a digital set-top box to home network computers using a wireless connection. We believe it important that a generic “Home Network Interface” category be added under “Additional Functionalities Allowance” to account for the other interfaces and their uses. We have suggested a

² See Letter from Andy Scott, Vice President, Engineering, NCTA, to Katharine Kaplan, ENERGY STAR Product Manager, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (November 14, 2007).

³ We were not able to provide specific recommendations on the kWhr/year allocations by comment deadline, but are researching these values further and will be able to provide this detail to the EPA at a later date.

⁴ For example the Optical Termination Network Terminal unit (“ONT”) used by some service providers is an example of a Gateway and should be considered as such. The ONT provides many of the home networking functions that the Gateway is meant to include, and extracts power from the home similar to the way a traditional set-top box does.

conservative annual energy consumption value to associate with the Home Network Interface.

Tier 2

We respectfully ask that EPA reconsider its decision to retain Tier 2 criteria. Our set-top box technology and features will change dramatically over the next several years, and it would be premature for the EPA to assign Tier 2 criteria, even as a target, at this time. As we stated on numerous occasions, based our current set-top design roadmaps, we cannot meet the Tier 2 criteria as currently defined - an opinion we believe is shared by all service provider and manufacturer stakeholders. We again request that EPA eliminate Tier 2 criteria from the requirements, and instead periodically re-examine annual energy allowances for set-top base and additional functionalities with stakeholders and adjust these criteria as appropriate in future versions of the ENERGY STAR[®] Program Requirements for Set-top Boxes.

Reporting Criteria

The EPA has represented to Stakeholders that in-depth information on the reporting requirements for participants is forthcoming. Our members will need the opportunity to read and review such documentation prior to any commitment to ENERGY STAR[®] requirements. Individual companies' purchase and deployment figures are highly confidential and should not be required, nor be able to be inferred by the metrics reported to EPA.

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NCTA looks forward to working with the EPA and other stakeholders in developing the ENERGY STAR[®] Program Requirements for Set-top Boxes. We believe the comments and suggestions we have offered help establish reasonable criteria that will allow cable service providers and manufacturers to make improvements in product energy efficiency. Should you have any questions or seek additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



Andy Scott
Vice President of Engineering

cc: Darcy Martinez, ICF International

Attachment