



## **INSTITUTE OF HEATING & AIR CONDITIONING INDUSTRIES, INC.**

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March 21, 2005

Ms. Rachel Schmeltz  
ENERGYSTAR Program Manager  
Environmental Protection Agency  
Ariel Rios Building, SW, MS 6202J  
1200 Pennsylvania Ave., NW  
Washington, DC 20460

Dear Ms. Schmeltz:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on EnergyStar's Draft Specification dated January 28, 2005. As President of the Institute of Heating and Air Conditioning Industries (IHACI), I am writing to you on behalf of our members. IHACI is an organization of contractors, distributors, manufacturers, and utilities, representing all the major disciplines required to implement successful programs. We are dedicated to the promotion and communication of all matters relating to HVAC in the southern California area where hundreds of thousands of HVAC retrofits and new construction systems are installed each year.

In commenting on the draft specification, I would first like to say that we applaud EnergyStar's efforts to increase the efficiency of installed HVAC systems. Here in California, we have a special need for increases in such practices. Effective this October, a new requirement goes into effect regarding the testing and sealing of ducts. It is related to the installation component of your draft specification, and I believe a great deal of experience, directly applicable to your installation component, will be gained once this new requirement goes into effect. I recommend that you stay in touch with how this requirement works out during the 15 months it is in effect before EnergyStar's component becomes applicable in January of 2007.

Comments from our member's representatives are focused on the installation component of the draft:

1) Both the equipment sizing and verification issues could be resolved in one step. Simply require that a NATE certified technician sign off on the installation. Provide an EnergyStar developed form which the technician uses as a guide for what he is to do relative to sizing, and any include other verifications that EnergyStar requires. This form is filled out, signed and included with the invoice to the customer. It could become a precursor to the "commissioning" report. That a NATE certified technician is required will encourage all businesses involved in HVAC to get such certified personnel on staff or their current people qualified.

2) The draft specification calls for a "matched assembly". Further clarification is needed on this point. Does "matched" mean the same manufacturer for the coil as the condenser? Does it mean that the combination is listed in the CEE/ARI database? Or does it mean that documentation exists as to the energy efficiency performance of the combination?

a) We recommend against defining "matched" to mean the same manufacturer for both

coil and condenser. Most contractors depend upon 3<sup>rd</sup> party coils to be competitive in the market. Requiring the same manufacturer will surely result in a marked decrease in participation in the EnergyStar program.

b) Defining “matched” to mean that the combination is listed in the CEE/ARI database (which is hinted at, but not made clear in the draft) is fine provided there are *extremely efficient and reliable* mechanisms in place for keeping that database continuously updated and for disputes to be resolved. Substantial frustration for all parties results when implementers in the field believe (and they in turn tell their customers) that a combination meets the requirements, but which is not found in the database for extended periods of time. This, too, would ultimately result in a substantial decrease in program participation.

c) So long as documentation exists as to the energy efficiency performance of the coil/condenser combination, this should be sufficient for EnergyStar to consider them “matched”, and this is what we recommend.

3) Our members’ area of greatest concern resides with the independent 3<sup>rd</sup> party verification requirement. We urge EnergyStar to adopt a form of self-verification.

a) First, consider that the process of selecting and installing a new system takes place in a highly competitive, fast-paced business environment. Each contractor is expected by his prospective customer to provide a fixed price bid on the work to be performed. In order to provide this bid with confidence, the contractor has to know that he can control both the scope of work and its schedule. As soon as an independent 3<sup>rd</sup> party is required, the contractor is asked to forgo this control. He can influence the scope of work, and he can influence the schedule, but he can control neither. This is not a sound business practice, especially in a fast-paced, competitive environment. For many, this falls into the realm of an unacceptable level of business risk and for this reason many, if not most, contractors may elect to avoid promoting EnergyStar. We suggest again that EnergyStar pay close attention to how the installation component of California’s duct testing and sealing requirement unfolds.

b) To date, the EnergyStar HVAC program, as well as other HVAC programs sponsored by the utilities, have been highly successful without an independent 3<sup>rd</sup> party verification on each and every installation. Why change the fundamental structure of a program design that has proven itself to work well? Currently, you will find that most contractors are happy to support EnergyStar. Granted, EnergyStar is entitled to an independent verification to determine how effective its program is. This can be accomplished in ways that do not disrupt the flow of competitive business. One such method would be for EnergyStar to conduct its own independent tests. It could establish a pool of independent 3<sup>rd</sup> parties who have met established qualification criteria to carry out these tests. Simply identify homeowners who have recently purchased an EnergyStar system, and ask them for permission to conduct an independent check. Then, contract with one of the independents to do the test and provide the results. An accumulation of the results will allow EnergyStar to see how the program is working, and how it can or should be changed. We are sure there are many other ways independent checks of the installations can take place. **Our concern on this part of the draft specification is that implementation may be untenable, as there are three significant changes proposed for the program at one time: an installation component to the specification, an independent 3<sup>rd</sup> party verification, and that the verification is 100% of the time. Any one of these changes constitutes a major implementation risk, but to do them all at once becomes untenable. We urge you to adopt an alternate approach such as recommended above, or that you phase these three facets of the requirement in over time.**

Thank you again for allowing us the opportunity to comment on the draft specification. We hope these comments are carefully considered and folded into the installation component of the specification that goes into effect in January of 2007. We believe the changes recommended will make for a highly robust and successful EnergyStar program.

Sincerely,



Michael Carson  
President  
Institute of Heating & Air Conditioning Industries, Inc.