



Frequently Asked Questions

WaterSense® Product Certification and Labeling

How does a product earn the WaterSense label?

The first step toward obtaining the WaterSense label is for the product manufacturer to enter into a WaterSense partnership agreement with EPA. A copy of the WaterSense partnership agreement is available on the WaterSense Web site at www.epa.gov/watersense. Manufacturers can sign a WaterSense partnership agreement with EPA once a draft specification has been released for a product they produce/carry or manufacture under a private label. Under the partnership agreement, manufacturers will have 12 months to obtain certification for a product that conforms to the relevant WaterSense specification.

The second step is to have the product certified for conformance to the WaterSense specification by a licensed certifying body either accredited by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) in accordance with the WaterSense certification system, or otherwise approved for that purpose by EPA.

Manufacturers apply directly to the licensed certifying body for certification.

Who will authorize the use of the WaterSense label?

The licensed certifying body will authorize the use of the WaterSense label. This will lessen the burden on manufacturers by reducing the layers of approval and associated wait time for product labeling. In addition, the licensed certifying body will also include its name in close proximity to the WaterSense label, which will aid in tracking the use of the label in the marketplace. The licensed

certifying bodies will authorize the use of the WaterSense label in accordance with requirements specified by EPA.

What criteria must a licensed certifying body meet in order to certify products?

Initially, EPA will approve a licensed certifying body to certify products and authorize the use of the WaterSense label, provided it meets each of the following criteria. Each licensed certifying body:

- Shall demonstrate that it is accredited by ANSI in accordance with ISO/IEC Guide 65, *General requirements for bodies operating product certification systems*
- Shall have plumbing products or other product categories directly related to WaterSense specifications included in its scope of accreditation
- Shall declare that the laboratories used by the product certification body have the competence and capability to conduct tests in accordance with relevant WaterSense specifications
- Shall declare that it has the technical expertise required in the evaluation of relevant products for WaterSense
- Shall declare that its ongoing surveillance requirements for WaterSense labeled products will be equivalent to current surveillance requirements for the certification of similar products
- Shall indicate which WaterSense specification(s) are relevant to its current ANSI accredited scope
- Shall sign a licensing agreement with EPA related to the conditions for authorizing the use of the WaterSense label

Which licensed certifying bodies are accredited by ANSI or otherwise approved by EPA to certify products?

A listing of approved licensed certifying bodies that meet WaterSense criteria is posted on the WaterSense Web site, or can be obtainable from the WaterSense Helpline at (866) WTR-SENS (987-7367). EPA anticipates that licensed certifying bodies currently approved to certify plumbing products will be on this list.

The relevant WaterSense specifications for which the product certification bodies are approved will also be identified on this list. Products may be certified by any licensed certifying body accredited for the relevant WaterSense specification.

What is generally involved in product certification?

At a minimum, a sample of the product will be selected and tested for conformance to the relevant WaterSense specification. Certification may also include factory visits, periodic retests, or other approaches to monitor ongoing conformance. These details are still being evaluated for specific product categories.

How will consumers know that a product has been certified?

Only products certified to WaterSense specifications are allowed to bear the WaterSense label. In addition, EPA will maintain a list of WaterSense labeled products on the WaterSense Web site.

Will this certification process apply to all products?

EPA will require all WaterSense labeled products to be certified by a licensed certifying body. EPA may, however, adjust the specific certification requirements as appropriate for individual product categories.

Are there licensed certifying bodies that can certify all products?

There are licensed certifying bodies that are currently ANSI accredited to certify a majority of the products for which EPA is interested in developing specifications. EPA anticipates that more licensed certifying bodies will obtain accreditation to certify products as additional WaterSense specifications are developed.

Why did EPA choose ANSI accredited third-party certification?

EPA wants to ensure the WaterSense program's integrity and sustainability. EPA also wants to ensure consumer confidence in the products that bear the WaterSense label.

Licensed certifying bodies, independent of EPA and the product manufacturers, will certify product conformity to the specifications, authorize use of the WaterSense label, and conduct periodic surveillance of a product's continued conformance. ANSI accredited certification is the already established framework in the United States to verify that products in the marketplace meet specifications and standards.

What is the cost of certification to product manufacturers?

The cost structure for product certification is determined by the licensed certifying bodies. EPA anticipates that the testing fee and cost for certification of products, which may include opening a new certification file or adding models to an existing file, will be in line with the current cost structure for plumbing product certification by an ANSI accredited licensed certifying body.

How will this certification process impact smaller manufacturers of products?

EPA is in the process of developing the requirements for certification, and is considering the impact on small businesses in doing so. At the same time, EPA is receiving input from interested stakeholders. While there will be some cost impact on all manufacturers to submit a product for certification, the strength of the WaterSense label should help products stand out in the marketplace. This should be of particular value to small business partners.

Will the development of the certification program delay specifications?

No, specifications for the initial WaterSense labeled products and development of the certification approach are proceeding at the same time.

How long will the process take from the time I submit my product for certification until the time when I can apply the WaterSense label to products?

The exact process and timing will be determined by the product certification body conducting the certification. Product certification bodies recognize that time to market is an important consideration and will compete for a manufacturer's business in this area. EPA anticipates that the time to achieve product certification to WaterSense specifications will be similar to the time it currently takes to get plumbing products certified to American Society of Mechanical Engineers (ASME) and other relevant standards.

How will EPA know that a product has been certified?

Product certification bodies are required to maintain a listing of all products they certify on their Web sites. They will periodically submit an updated list to EPA so the WaterSense Web registry remains as current as possible. Using the WaterSense product notification form that is available on the WaterSense Web site, manufacturers should also notify EPA directly when a new model is certified. This will ensure that EPA has the most current list of certified products on the WaterSense Web site.

How do stakeholders provide input on the specification development and certification development processes?

EPA is interested in input from all stakeholders in the specification development and certification development processes. EPA has established a mailing list to notify interested persons when various programmatic elements are developed and released for public input. Please visit <www.epa.gov/watersense/contact.htm> to be added to the WaterSense e-mail and mailing list, and specify your interest in becoming part of the specification and certification development processes in the "Message" field.