



**PLUMBING-HEATING-COOLING
CONTRACTORS ASSOCIATION®**

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August 21, 2026

Michael Helmer
Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary
Office of Critical Minerals and Energy Innovation
U.S. Department of Energy
1000 Independence Avenue SW Washington, DC 20585-0121

Re: Procedures, Interpretations, and Policies for Consideration of New or Revised Energy Conservation Standards and Test Procedures for Consumer Products and Certain Commercial/Industrial Equipment

Docket Number: EERE-2025-BT-STD-0001; RIN: 1904-AF72

Dear Sir:

The Plumbing-Heating-Cooling Contractors—National Association (PHCC) is the oldest construction trades association in the country representing approximately 3,000 plumbing and HVACR contractors employing over 64,000 professionals across the United States. Since 1883, this organization and its members have focused on the safe installation and maintenance of plumbing and HVAC systems. PHCC appreciates the opportunity to comment on this proposed rule known as the “Process Rule.”

PHCC wishes to acknowledge that the Association has signed on to an industry joint comment response to the proposed Process Rule and is agreement with those submitted comments. We submit the following additional comments which reinforce those joint comments and add some considerations from the installing contractor community.

1. PHCC supports the reversion to the 2020 language for the Process Rule and agrees with making the rule binding upon DOE. In order to provide transparency and offer stakeholders opportunities to evaluate all proposals, this binding nature should apply to de-regulatory actions as well. While we agree that some regulations may have outlived their usefulness or practicality, a rush to judgement increases the likelihood of unintended consequences later on. We see benefit in allowing time for consideration and stakeholder input on both the creation and reduction side of the rulemaking process.
2. In line with the comment above, PHCC supports the proposed 180-day separation between test procedure rule making and the minimum 75-day comment period. Previous administrations have run on much shorter time schedules, sometimes rationalizing that a proposed change was minor or an obvious conclusion; perhaps that was true for DOE or some stakeholders. Other stakeholders, and speaking from a trade association

perspective, need time to work through a committee process. Committees typically meet monthly or quarterly, proposed rules must be evaluated, researched, presented to and discussed by those committees to reach an opinion. When multiple agencies have regulations of interest or a single agency has multiple proposals, it is burdensome to gather volunteer leaders on short notice. Maintaining reasonable time frames or granting of reasonable extensions (i.e. more than 7 to 14 days) will allow more thorough and thoughtful feedback to DOE.

3. PHCC also supports the negotiated rulemaking process and in the past has volunteered to work on these committees. DOE and its consultants have done good work in the past to assemble varying stakeholder perspectives for these committees which many times has allowed proposals to be fully considered and a consensus position to be reached. As a contractor association, it has been helpful to offer explanations of what some of these proposals mean to consumers and their budgets. It is further logical that once a consensus is reached, that the use of a Direct Final Rule (DFR) would be appropriate. PHCC believes the use of negotiated rulemaking and DFR's can improve the rulemaking process, particularly once the implementation and effective phases commence.
4. PHCC applauds the concept of applying metrics to define significant energy savings and establish guideposts for how those savings impact the rulemaking process. We appreciate the idea of 2 Quads or 10% energy savings on a Full Fuel Cycle basis (FFC). We have concerns that 2 Quads could be an arbitrary value given the wide variety of regulated products, those products baseline energy consumption, and the total number of products sold across the years. High production, high energy use products could well add up to 2 Quads with a low improvement of efficiency while low production, low energy might not qualify with a significant efficiency improvement. Further, moving to FFC presents some questions; in this rule the qualifying number of Quads went up from 0.3 to 2.0 (compared to 2020 language), a marked improvement by itself. However, there was no change to the 10% energy saving criteria. Given the losses in energy distribution, saving 10% FFC could result in perhaps as low as 3% to 5% at the site. If the 2020 proposal targeted 10% saving at the site, wouldn't the FFC percentage need to be higher, perhaps 20% to 30% to achieve similar effect? It seems like a softening of the percentage requirement that is contrary to the Quad requirement. PHCC supports the concept but believes the criteria need adjustment.
5. Lastly, DOE suggests an economic barrier for presumptive consumer threshold which would allow 20% of consumers to bear net costs. We understand that to mean these consumers would not receive sufficient payback to justify the change. To a contractor, that means 1 in 5 clients would suffer no net benefits, which seems like a significant percentage. It is all well and good to save energy but the conversation across the kitchen table isn't about energy, it's about money. As proposed, up to 10% increased cost is acceptable and 20% of clients could suffer as well. PHCC would also point to previous comments on other rulemakings where the installation costs have been called into question and has suggested that installation labor rates were understated. If DOE has modeled installations with understated costs, the modeled 20% of impacted consumers



could actually be much higher. Mom and pop don't want to hear that the DOE did this, they blame the contractor. Ideally, no one should suffer, in reality, some percentage will with new equipment, others will with repairs to existing equipment. We encourage DOE to reconsider this and lower the acceptable percentage of consumers with net costs.

We again wish to express our thanks for the opportunity to provide comment on the proposed changes to the Process Rule. PHCC looks forward to the completion of this rulemaking process and is happy to provide additional information if necessary.

Respectfully submitted,

Charles R. White
VP Regulatory Affairs

PHCC—National Association

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