DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy

Finding of No Significant Impact Energy Conservation Program for Consumer Products

AGENCY: Department of Energy.

ACTION: Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for Energy Conservation Standard for Residential Central Air Conditioners and Heat Pumps.

SUMMARY: The Energy Policy and Conservation Act, as amended by the National Energy Conservation Policy Act and the National Appliance Energy Conservation Act, and the National Appliance Energy Conservation Amendments, prescribes energy conservation standards for certain major household appliances, and requires the Department of Energy (DOE) to administer an energy conservation program for these products. Based on an Environmental Assessment (EA), DOE/EA–1352, DOE has determined that the adoption of energy efficiency Trial Standard Level (TSL) 4 for residential central air conditioners and heat pumps, as adopted by the Final Rule entitled the ''Energy Conservation Program for Consumer Products: Residential Central Air Conditioners and Heat Pumps Energy Conservation Standards,'' would not be a major Federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment within the meaning of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA). Therefore, an environmental impact statement (EIS) is not required, and the Department is issuing this finding of no significant impact (FONSI).

ADDRESSES: Public Availability: Copies of the EA are available from: U.S. Department of Energy, Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy, Forrestal Building, Mail Station EE–41, 1000 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C., 20585–0121, (202) 586–9127.

FOR FURTHER PROGRAM INFORMATION CONTACT: Dr. Michael E. McCabe, Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy (EE–41), U.S. Department of Energy, 1000 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20585–0121, (202) 586–9127.

For Further Information Regarding the DOE NEPA Process, Contact: Carol Borgstrom, Director, Office of NEPA Policy and Assistance (EH–42), 1000 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20585–0119, (202) 586–4600.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Description of the Proposed Action: The proposed action is the establishment of a revised energy conservation standard (TSL 4) for residential central air conditioners and heat pumps.

Environmental Impacts: The EA evaluates the environmental impacts of a range of new energy conservation standards for residential central air conditioners and heat pumps. The results are presented for each potential trial standard level. Each potential trial standard level is an alternative action, and the environmental impacts of each alternative are compared to what would be expected to happen if no new standard were adopted, i.e., the ''no action'' alternative.

The main environmental impact is decreased emissions from fossil-fueled electricity generation. All of the minimum efficiency levels considered for this appliance product category would result in decreased electricity use and, therefore, a reduction in power plant emissions. The proposed efficiency standard would generally decrease air pollution by decreasing future energy demand. The environmental analysis considers two pollutants, nitrogen oxides (NO_X) and sulfur dioxide (SO_2), and one emission, carbon. The Department, in the Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, proposed TSL 3. However, in the Final Rule, DOE is adopting TSL 4, an alternative that was also analyzed in the EA. The results of the analysis show an estimated cumulative reduction of 27.7 to 32.7 million tons of carbon equivalent emissions, and 84.4 to 93.8 thousand tons NO_X for TSLs 3 and 4, respectively, through the year 2020. This would be a national reduction of 0.19% and 0.23% of carbon equivalent emissions, and 0.08% and 0.09% of NO_X. Because emissions of SO_2 from power plants are capped by clean air legislation, physical emissions of this pollutant from electricity generation will be only minimally affected by residential central air conditioners and heat pumps standards. The maximum SO_2 allowed by law will most likely still be produced, but because SO_2 emissions are traded, and if SO_2 emissions are lowered due to less power generation, then the cost of SO_2 emission credits may decrease slightly. Therefore, the EA did not consider changes in power sector SO_2 emissions because they will be negligible.

Determination: Based upon the EA, DOE has determined that the adoption of the proposed energy-efficiency standard for residential central air conditioners and heat pumps would not constitute a major Federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment, within the meaning of NEPA. Therefore, an EIS is not required, and the Department is issuing this FONSI.

Issued in Washington, D.C., the 4th day, of January 2001.

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