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EPA is excited about the excellent dialogue and feedback that is being generated as we continue to engage with program partners across the country in preparation for the launch of the new ENERGY STAR for Homes guidelines. In response to this feedback, EPA is issuing updates to several important implementation details for the new ENERGY STAR for Homes guidelines that were scheduled to become effective at the beginning of 2011 (i.e., Version 2.5).

First, EPA is delaying the implementation date for the v2.5 guidelines by three months. This change impacts the implementation timeline in several key ways:

- 1) Single family homes that are permitted before April 1, 2011 can continue to be qualified under the current v2 guidelines until July 1, 2011 (previously, this applied only to single family homes permitted before January 1, 2011);
- 2) Condos and apartments in multi-family buildings that are permitted before April 1, 2011 can continue to be qualified under the current v2 guidelines until January 1, 2012 (previously, this applied only to units in multi-family buildings permitted before January 1, 2011); and
- 3) All homes both permitted and completed between April 1, 2011 and December 31, 2011 must be qualified using the new v2.5 guidelines (previously, this applied to homes permitted and completed between January 1, 2011 and December 31, 2011).

Further, EPA is expanding the application of the term 'permitted by' in determining which version of the guidelines a home must be built to earn the label. Specifically, in recognition of common practice to not pull permits until after a home is sold, the home's signed contract date will be considered equivalent to the permit date.

Additionally, EPA is introducing a v2.5 transition period for multifamily homes that are financed through low-income housing agencies. All multi-family homes financed through low-income housing agencies may earn the ENERGY STAR under the last iteration of the guidelines, Version 2, until January 1, 2013 as long as the application for funding for those homes was received by the low-income housing agency before April 1, 2011. If the application for funding is received between April 1, 2011 and December 31, 2011, then the homes must earn the ENERGY STAR under the Version 2.5 guidelines if completed before January 1, 2012, and under the Version 3 guidelines if completed after January 1, 2012. If the application for funding is received on or after January 1, 2012 then the homes must earn the ENERGY STAR under the Version 3.0 guidelines.

Finally, to accommodate growing partner concerns about the impact of basement square footage on the ENERGY STAR HERS Index Target when the Size Adjustment Factor is applied, EPA has decided that basement areas, whether finished or not, shall not be counted as conditioned space for the purpose of determining a home's Size Adjustment Factor. To qualify for this exemption, basements must have at least half of the wall area from floor to underside of ceiling framing below grade. Note that this exemption is only for the purposes of determining a home's Size Adjustment Factor. It does not affect the Conditioned Floor Area as defined by RESNET and used in the course of rating a home or determining maximum allowable duct leakage.

EPA is continuing to revise the v3 guidelines in response to partner questions and evolving standards and expects to issue Revision 02 in early 2011. Thereafter, it is expected that the guidelines will not be updated more frequently than every three months and that after a year of implementation, the updates will slow to every six months. EPA will specify an adoption timeline for each revision to allow partners time to implement them. With each new release of the guidelines, partners will be notified by email, and the revised program documents, along with a version tracking document, will be posted to the EPA Website at www.energystar.gov/homes.

We appreciate our partners' patience as we move into the final phase of implementing these very important changes to the program. If you have any questions regarding the changes above, please contact us at energystarhomes@energystar.gov.

For more information, visit: www.energystar.gov