

ENERGY STAR® Single-Family New Homes HVAC Grading for HVAC Contractors



Overview

An exciting new option for meeting ENERGY STAR HVAC design and commissioning requirements is here. This option, called “Track A - HVAC Grading,” leverages ANSI / RESNET / ACCA / ICC Standard 310 for grading the installation of HVAC systems. Standard 310 integrates an HVAC design review and four sequential field tasks into a standard energy rating. Properly installed HVAC systems will be rewarded with better scores, which can help meet the ENERGY STAR ERI target.



The Five Key Sequential Tasks in Standard 310

Task 1	Task 2	Task 3	Task 4	Task 5
Design Review	Total Duct Leakage	Blower Fan Airflow	Blower Fan Watt Draw	Refrigerant Charge

This new option can be used, but is not required for ENERGY STAR certification. Partners can continue to follow the original design and commissioning requirements if desired, which have been rebranded “Track B - HVAC Credential.” However, for projects using the new option, stepping up from an ERI rating to ENERGY STAR certification will be easier than ever.

HVAC grading makes it easier to certify ENERGY STAR single-family new homes:

- Integrates most ENERGY STAR HVAC requirements into an ERI rating
- Does not require the use of a credentialed HVAC contractor
- Does not require the contractor to complete the HVAC Commissioning Checklist
- Rewards proper installation with ERI points and helps meet the 45L tax credit

FAQs

ENERGY STAR Timeline: Can I use it now? When do I have to use it?

The “Track A - HVAC Grading” option can be used now. If you’re also providing design services, then note that new HVAC design report templates that will streamline certification are being programmed into HVAC design software programs.

Partners who want to continue using the original requirements, rebranded “Track B - HVAC Credential,” may do so. While Track A offers many benefits, partners will not be forced to use it.

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What does this mean for me?

As an HVAC contractor, you are still responsible for properly installing the HVAC system per the design report and should continue to assess the quality of installation during startup. If you're also providing design services, then you'll be completing a slightly different HVAC design report, along with an ENERGY STAR supplement. However, it will look very familiar to designers who have previously filled out HVAC design reports for the ENERGY STAR program.

The key difference is that Raters will be verifying key elements of the design and installation quality for the purpose of the rating. This is very similar to tight ducts – HVAC contractors must seal the ducts to achieve low leakage, while Raters are responsible for verifying their tightness.

In addition, because Std. 310 is applicable to any project getting an ERI rating, and not just to those being ENERGY STAR certified, the market will greatly expand for properly-installed HVAC systems.

How much will it cost?

The costs should decrease somewhat relative to Track B - HVAC Credential. While it will take about the same amount of time to properly install the HVAC system, if a home is using Track A - HVAC Grading, contractors are not required to fill out the ENERGY STAR HVAC Commissioning Checklist. And if you're providing design services, it should take approximately the same amount of time to complete the new HVAC design report and ENERGY STAR supplement.

Do HVAC designers and contractors have to do anything under this new path?

Yes! The HVAC system still must be properly designed and properly installed by the HVAC contractor in order to meet ENERGY STAR requirements and lower the ERI score of the home.

Should I still be credentialed?

If the builders you work with are using Track B - HVAC Credential, then you must be credentialed, the same as before. If they are using Track A - HVAC Grading, it's recommended that you maintain your credential until Track A has been used long enough to demonstrate that their HVAC systems are consistently well-designed and properly installed. Only then is it recommended that you discuss with your builders whether there's value in maintaining the credential.

What do I need to do next?

Continue to install HVAC systems properly just as you've been doing. Also, continue to complete the ENERGY STAR HVAC Commissioning Checklist until your builders begin using Track A - HVAC Grading. If you're providing design services, be on the lookout for the new Std. 310 HVAC Design Report and ENERGY STAR supplement templates, which will be added to design software programs.

Learn more by reading Std. 310 at www.resnet.us/resnet-ansi/. To see how ENERGY STAR integrates the HVAC grading option into its program, visit: www.energystar.gov/newhomesrequirements and review the national program requirements.