Training for Efficiency

UTILITIES TAP GOVERNMENT'S ENERGY STAR EFFORT

BY KATE LEWIS

Kate Lewis

WITH ENERGY PRICES CONTINUING to skyrocket – now more than ever – people are taking the initiative to incorporate energy efficiency into their lives. Whether through replacing their incandescent light bulbs with Energy Star compact fluorescent light bulbs, buying a programmable thermostat, or better insulating their homes, consumers are looking for energy and money saving opportunities. They understand that in addition to saving money, using energy more efficiently means we will produce fewer greenhouse gas emissions, reduce the amount of carbon released into the atmosphere, and better safeguard the environment for future generations.

As a result – now more than ever – retail sales staff, utilities, and energy efficiency program sponsors need to be armed with credible, consistent, and actionable information to help meet this consumer demand. Energy Star, a program backed by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Department of Energy provides energy efficiency solutions for the fight against global warming and offers resources through the online Energy Star Training Center.

Since 1992, the Energy Star program has helped Americans increase energy efficiency where we live, work, shop, play, worship, and educate. As a government-backed program, Energy Star provides credible, third-party, unbiased information, and acts as a source of authority on energy efficiency. Energy Star provides a trustworthy label and clear differentiation that empowers the individual to make a difference through choosing Energy Star qualified products. These products deliver the same or better performance as comparable models while using less energy and saving money.

TO LEARN ABOUT THE ENERGY STAR TRAINING CENTER, GO TO: www.energystar.gov/training.

In 2007, Americans, with the help of Energy Star, prevented more than 40 million metric tons of greenhouse gas emissions and saved more than $16 billion on their utility bills. According to a recent survey conducted by the Consortium for Energy Efficiency, more than 70 percent of U.S. households recognized the Energy Star label. Building upon the growing success of the label, EPA created the online Energy Star Training Center to consolidate sales training materials for product manufacturers, retailers, utility companies, and energy efficiency program sponsors.

Designed to help partners improve their sales effectiveness, the Energy Star Training Center offers a convenient place to find up-to-date savings figures – in sales training presentations; sell sheets; and partner agreements – for qualified appliances, room air conditioners, lighting, home electronics, office equipment, commercial food service equipment, and more. The site is continually updated to ensure it provides relevant and reliable materials that support Energy Star promotional campaigns.

In addition, the Energy Star Training Center includes a section dedicated to utilities because – now more than ever – these organizations play a large role in continuing to educate consumers about the benefits of Energy Star. This section of the site showcases successful training programs, best practices, and links to partner Web sites with valuable training resources.

Austin Energy, for example created rebates and incentives for Energy Star-qualified home performance improvements. Now when Austin Energy's consumers buy an Energy Star-qualified air conditioner or heat pump or other products to improve home energy efficiency from participating companies, customers receive a rebate that covers as much as 20 percent of the cost of certain improvements. The Austin Energy program provides information that can help other organizations decide whether to undertake similar efforts.

In addition to the online resources, the Energy Star training team offers complimentary, customized service to partners in support of their outreach efforts – whether it's in the form of providing or reviewing training materials or offering guidance to a utility company's incentive program retail training team.

The Energy Star Training Center makes it more convenient for program partners to equip their training staff with up-to-date materials and helps ensure that consumers receive the information they need to make informed decisions. And now more than ever, these decisions are essential to the fight against global warming.

Kate Lewis is an Energy Star marketing manager in the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

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