

Tips for finding energy efficient appliances

TWINSBURG, Ohio (AP) When Judy Sautner recently walked into Power Appliance, a store in a southeastern suburb of Cleveland, she had one goal in mind: replace her daughter’s broken dryer with something that worked and didn’t break the bank.

“I wasn’t really worried about all the bells and whistles,” said Sautner. Jay Buchanan, the store’s owner, said many customers are like Sautner, and what they are looking for frequently ends up being an appliance with the Energy Star symbol.

The U.S.-based program claims that its blue seal of approval on efficient appliances saves households an average of \$450 on their bills per year. Since its launch in 1992, Energy Star appliances have also prevented 4 billion metric tons of greenhouse gas emissions, the main cause of climate change.

But the program’s future is unclear. The Environmental Protection Agency has announced an agency reorganization plan that would eliminate its Energy Star offices. That would make it more difficult for customers to find energy efficient appliances. Here is a look at Energy Star along with tips to find energy efficient appliances if the program goes away:

How Energy Star works

Energy Star is a voluntary labeling program. The EPA sets energy efficiency standards for various machines, and then companies that produce them can try to hit or ex-



An Energy Star logo is displayed on a box for a freezer in Evendale, Ohio, on Jan. 21.

ceed those standards. If they do, they get the Energy Star sticker certifying it works as well as a standard product and uses less energy.

Companies are incentivized to make products that earn that sticker because state and local utility rebate programs, along with federal tax incentives, base qualifying appliances on the program. Consumers who want to save money through incentives and lower gas and electric bills know to look for it, and according to the program’s website, roughly 90% of households recognize the symbol.

Qualifying specifications vary depending on the appliance, but requirements include the amount of energy consumed when a machine is turned off, the inclusion of a low-power or “sleep” mode and a minimum efficiency rating when it’s operating.

If Energy Star goes away

Finding and buying energy-efficient products without that certification wouldn’t be impossible, just difficult, said Elizabeth Hewitt, associate professor of technology and society at Stony Brook University.

“You have to become a really savvy shopper,” she said.

It would mean consumers searching for, say, a dishwasher, would have to put together a list of options, gather specifications that come with each product, compare them, and recognize which numbers indicate that the dishwasher is energy efficient.

Specifications for a washing machine, for example, might include how many clothes can fit in a load, the gallons of water per load and the electricity required to run a cycle, while a furnace’s specs focus on how good it is at converting energy into

heat, how much of that heat leaks and how well its fan does at blowing hot air into the house.

Converting all those numbers into a single seal of approval would be complicated.

“Unless they’re deep into analytics, they’re not gonna freakin’ know,” said Buchanan.

Buchanan said his customers usually ask for help finding energy efficient appliances. So if that seal of approval disappears, it’ll change his life more than the lives of his customers. He said he’ll have to do the work to figure out which appliances will save on energy bills.

The concern, said Executive Director Ben Stapleton with U.S. Green Building Council California, a nonprofit focused on sustainable building, is that extra set of steps will deter people from prioritizing energy efficiency.

“If we’re just relying on the manufacturer and relying on people to go through the manual to see what the power draw is, it’s hard to imagine that being effective,” he said.

Tips for picking appliances

Many utilities are incentivized to help households and businesses buy efficient appliances.

If Energy Star were to go away, utilities would need to figure out a new way of determining which appliances qualify for their incentive programs, said Mark Kresowik, senior policy director with the

nonprofit American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy. Calling and asking them about qualifying appliances would be a good place to start, he said.

Consumer Reports, an organization that does independent product reviews, can provide information about appliances and their performance, although it requires a subscription to access some of its more detailed information.

The Consortium for Energy Efficiency, a collaboration with primarily utilities, has its own energy efficiency standards. Right now those standards are designed with Energy Star in mind, but Kresowik said incentive programs could shift to using product specifications.

The fate of Energy Star is still uncertain. The broad reorganization at the EPA reported last month would eliminate or reorganize large parts of the offices that keep the program running, but the EPA has not directly confirmed a plan to shut it down or provided a timeline.

Regardless of what happens to Energy Star or what appliances are bought, Stapleton said consumers always have agency to use products in an energy-efficient way, such as washing clothes in cold water or avoiding the water-heavy dishwasher settings. It always helps to choose the right sized products.

“Maybe I don’t need the largest microwave that’s on the market,” he said.

Florida set to execute a man convicted of raping and killing a woman outside of a bar

STARKE, Fla. (AP) A man convicted of raping and killing a woman near a bar in central Florida was scheduled to be executed Tuesday evening.

Thomas Lee Gudinas, 51, was set to receive a lethal injection at Florida State Prison near Starke for the May 1994 killing of Michelle McGrath.

Gudinas would be the seventh person put to death in Florida this year, with an eighth scheduled for next month. The state also executed six people in 2023, but only carried out one execution last year.

A total of 23 men have been put to death in the U.S. this year with scheduled executions set to make 2025 the year with the most executions since 2015.

Florida has executed more people than any other state this year, while Texas and South Carolina are tied for second place with four each. Alabama has executed three people, Oklahoma two, and Arizona, Indiana, Louisiana and Tennessee each have one. Mississippi is set to join the other states on Wednesday with its first execution since 2022.

Despite the increased frequency of executions this year, Department of Corrections spokesman Ted Veerman said there’s been no significant operational strain.

“Our staff are doing a fantastic job keeping up with the pace of these executions,” Veerman said Tuesday. “And we are going through with these in a professional manner.”

McGrath was last seen at a bar called Barbarella’s shortly before 3 a.m. on May 24, 1994. Her body, showing signs of serious trauma and sexual assault, was found several hours later in an alley next to a nearby school.

Gudinas had been at the same bar with friends

the night before, but they all later testified that they had left without him. A school employee who found McGrath’s body later identified Gudinas as a man who was fleeing the area shortly beforehand. Another woman also identified Gudinas as the person who chased her to her car the previous night and threatened to assault her.

Gudinas was convicted and sentenced to death in 1995.

Gudinas woke up at 4:45 a.m. Tuesday, a Department of Corrections spokesman said. He had one visitor, his mother. He did not meet with a spiritual adviser.

For his last meal, Gudinas had pepperoni pizza, fries and a soda, officials said.

Attorneys for Gudinas have filed appeals with the Florida Supreme Court and the U.S. Supreme Court.

The lawyers argued in their state filing that evidence related to “lifelong mental illnesses”

exempts Gudinas from being put to death. The Florida Supreme Court denied the appeals last week, ruling that the case law that shields intellectually disabled people from execution does not apply to individuals with other forms of mental illness or brain damage.

Meanwhile, a federal filing argues that the Florida governor’s unfettered discretion to sign death warrants violates death row inmates’ constitutional rights to due process and has led to an arbitrary process for determining who lives and who dies. The U.S.

Supreme Court on Tuesday afternoon denied

Gudinas’ application for a stay of execution.

PUBLIC NOTICE

LEGAL NOTICE

The Raceland-Worthington Independent School District will hold a public forum for district facility planning at 5:30 PM, July 7, 2025. Meeting will be held at the RWISD Board of Education at 100 Rams Blvd., Raceland, KY 41169.

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