

## What's the Government Doing with YOUR Utility Bill Now?

*Little-known "consumer protection" law coming into effect... at a price.*

How much time will you spend thinking about your air conditioner *this January*?

Be aware: that cold air will bring in some cold truth. Energy efficiency standards for residential air conditioners and heat pumps are becoming more stringent, effective January 23, 2006.

That's when the Department of Energy (DOE) will begin enforcing a 13 SEER efficiency standard for residential air conditioners and heat pumps (SEER stands for Seasonal Energy Efficiency Ratio). That's a 30 percent increase over the 10 SEER standard that applies to models built right now. SEER is similar to miles per gallon with your automobile, the higher the number the less it costs to operate.

How does this affect you? For a lot of folks, it will be a good news/bad news scenario. The good news is that the 13 SEER standard uses about 25% less energy than the 10 SEER, which is the current standard.

Everybody wants to save energy, right? But the question is "At what cost?" And that brings up some bad news. You'll be paying substantially more upfront for a replacement system that meets the new standard. You will also no longer be able to replace just the outdoor unit of your system. The new 13 SEER systems have much larger coil surfaces and volumes at both the indoor and outdoor unit. ***The new 13 SEER outdoor units will not operate properly when matched up to the older 10 and 12 SEER indoor coils.***

If it had been up to the air conditioning industry in general, the increased standard would have been 12 SEER. Manufacturing costs between a 10 SEER and 12 SEER aren't much different, and so the 12 SEER standard would have increased efficiency by around 20% – without breaking the bank for most home owners. But now with the 13 SEER standard about to go in place, new system purchasers will be forced into a position of having to pay more to save more.

This is all a done deal, so there's not much that can be done now – except to raise awareness and point out some options:

- If your system is more than 13 years old, it's probably not a highly energy efficient system. In that case, a system with a 10 SEER standard would substantially lower your energy use. While you'd still get the benefit of improved energy efficiency and comfort, you wouldn't have to pay the full cost of a 13 SEER system. The catch: *you have to act before January 2006 in order to reserve a system.*
- If your system is more than 15 years old, another option is to wait until after January and take the replacement plunge for one of the more expensive, higher efficiency systems. For those that live in their home year round, this could be a sound decision. If you call us we can conduct a home energy survey and be able to help you calculate potential energy savings and possible return on investment.

- If your system is fairly new, you've got a good option to consider – performing complete regular maintenance on the equipment to ensure as long a life as possible. A properly performed maintenance (not just a “check up”) will take an experienced technician one to two hours to complete. We can help with that too, give us a call.

For more information on this topic the web has tons of information. Visit the following websites: [www.getSEERious.com](http://www.getSEERious.com) and at [www.google.com](http://www.google.com) search “13 seer government requirement”

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