



ENERGY E-TIPS

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How to Interpret an Energy Guide Label

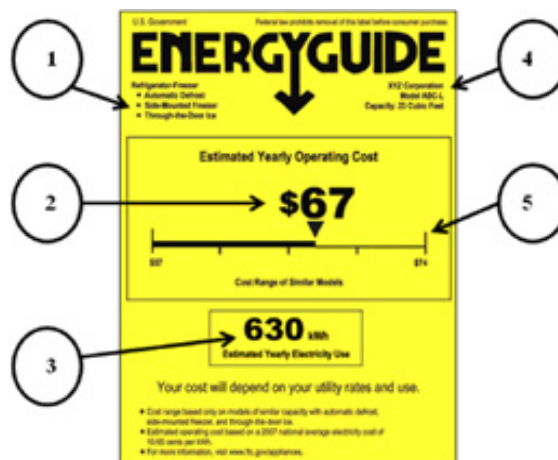
Arkansans have been told that one way to save energy and money is to look at Energy Guide and Energy Star labels. This edition of ENERGY E-TIPS will look into how to interpret and understand an Energy Guide label. The next edition will explore the Energy Star label.

Manufacturers must use standard test procedures developed by the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) to prove the energy use and efficiency of their products. Test results are printed on the yellow Energy Guide label which manufacturers are required to display on many appliances. Yellow Energy Guide labels are found mainly on large home appliances including washing machines, dishwashers, refrigerators, freezers, water heaters, furnaces, boilers, heat pumps and window and central air conditioners.

However, some appliances are not required to have energy guide labels, including televisions, ranges, ovens, dryers, humidifiers and dehumidifiers. Some of these appliances and products (including windows) often have an Energy Star Label, or an energy star logo may be present to show that it has been tested and approved by Energy Star.

The Energy Guide label estimates how much energy the appliance uses, compares energy use to similar products and lists approximate annual operating costs. A consumer's exact costs will depend on local utility rates and the type and source of energy. An Energy Star Qualified appliance must carry the Energy Guide Label, and the Energy Star logo is often shown on the Energy Guide Label.

Below is an example of an Energy Guide Label (from the Federal Trade Commissions' Facts for Consumers Energy Guidance pamphlet). This illustration emphasizes certain areas of the label you should read and understand before purchasing a product.



1. The main product features and similar models with an annual operating cost reflected in the cost range below.
2. Annual operating cost is based on electricity consumption and the national average cost for a kilowatt-hour.
3. An estimate of how much electricity the appliance uses in a year based on typical use. Multiply this by your local electricity rate on your utility bill to better judge what your actual operating cost might be.
4. The manufacture, model, and size tell you exactly what product this label describes.
5. The cost range helps you compare the energy use of different models by showing you the range of operating costs for models with similar features.

The Energy Guide label makes it easy to compare appliances to each other. For example, you can compare a fridge to another in a similar size range just by looking at their low or high-energy use. Buying the fridge that has a lower kWh/year will save you money in electricity costs.

If the same appliance also shows the Energy Star logo on the Energy Guide label, it's performed well in stringent government energy tests and will give you the lowest energy use, helping the environment and saving you even more. Energy Star appliances should use at least 10 to 25 percent less energy than nonqualified models.

Other things to consider when looking at an Energy Guide label:

- The operating costs are only estimates – the cost on the label is based on a national average price for electricity. Consider multiplying the “Estimated Yearly Electricity Use” by the electricity rate in your area. Also, remember that you may use the appliance more or less than average, increasing or decreasing operating costs.
- Sometimes the Energy Guide label is missing, so it may be a good idea to visit the manufacturer's website to see if the label is online.
- Not all Energy Guide Labels are the same – while all Energy Guide labels give you a way to compare the energy use of similar appliances, they may not all look the same. Furnaces don't have operating costs, and dishwasher labels have two costs (depending on the type of fuel used for water heating). Remember to compare the same fuels and products when making a purchasing decision.
- National Average Electricity Cost and Cost Range may be inaccurate – both are updated every five years. This means that the rate used for Energy Guide labels won't always reflect actual electricity prices at the time. It also means it's possible a newer model's operating cost won't be reflected in the cost range; however, the model would still have its own Energy Guide label.

References:

http://www.energystar.gov/index.cfm?c=products.pr_how_earn
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<http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/edu/pubs/consumer/homes/real4.shtm>
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