

Efficiency Standards for Commercial Refrigerators and Freezers Will Save Money for Businesses

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Updated federal efficiency standards for commercial refrigeration equipment will reduce a significant energy cost for restaurants, convenience stores, and supermarkets. A congressional resolution to cancel these standards, if adopted, would cost businesses and increase strain on the electric grid.

Keeping food and other perishable items can be a big expense: Almost half of food stores' electricity use is for refrigeration, according to federal data. Fortunately, updated efficiency standards finalized by the Department of Energy (DOE) in January will ensure new commercial refrigerators and freezers use proven technologies that reduce energy waste.

The standards will reduce overall costs for restaurants, convenience stores, and supermarkets that use these products. Savings on electricity bills will far exceed any increase in upfront costs, with a typical payback period of 3.5 years (the average expected product lifetime is about 12–14 years depending on the product type).

The standards set strengthened efficiency levels for a range of commercial refrigerators and freezers, such as those with transparent doors or without doors (common in grocery stores) and those with solid doors (common in commercial kitchens).

Most models on the market today, totaling more than 12,000 unique products, already meet the standards. As with all periodic updates of efficiency standards, the lower-performing models that do not yet meet new standards will need to be updated to match their peers to be sold when the standards take effect (in 2029 for these products).

DOE listened carefully to industry views of its original proposed standards and finalized less stringent ones, which give manufacturers more flexibility.

Commercial refrigeration standards were last updated in 2014. DOE was required by law to finalize new standards (if cost-effective) by 2022.

Canceling the standards would raise costs for businesses, which DOE estimates are set to save \$4.6 billion on utility bills (from products sold over 30 years) thanks to the standards. These costs could be passed on to grocery shoppers and other customers.

Keeping energy-wasting models on the market would also needlessly tie up electric grid capacity, constraining the growth of local manufacturing, AI data centers, and new residential or commercial developments.



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