

Explanation of Revisions to the *WaterSense® Home Certification System*

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) WaterSense program is announcing the release of Version 1.3 of the *WaterSense Home Certification System* (home certification system). This update reflects changes in industry practices pertaining to the verification and certification of homes.

In 2019, the EPA released a [draft of Version 2](#) of the WaterSense Labeled Homes Program that included fundamental changes to the program structure, including the technical requirements. While revisions to the program as a whole (including the technical requirements as described in the Version 2 draft specification) are outstanding, the EPA is instituting changes to this certification system so that stakeholders can continue to effectively use the [WaterSense New Home Specification, Version 1.2](#).

It is important to note the revisions made in the *WaterSense Home Certification System, Version 1.3* do not change the technical requirements for WaterSense labeled homes, as defined in the *WaterSense New Home Specification, Version 1.2* (including, but not limited to, the inspection checklists, WaterSense Water Budget Tool, and other performance and water efficiency criteria referenced therein). The revisions to the *WaterSense Home Certification System* are considered to be administrative changes and do not materially affect the specification's scope or requirements. As such, the EPA is not conducting an additional formal public comment period. The EPA received stakeholder input on the *WaterSense Draft Home Certification System, Version 2.0* during the public comment period for the revised WaterSense Labeled Homes Program. To the extent practical, the EPA has incorporated applicable comments on the certification and oversight structure into the *WaterSense Home Certification System, Version 1.3*.

The purpose of this document is to summarize the revisions to the *WaterSense Home Certification System*, share the rationale for the change, and provide necessary information regarding the transition from Version 1.2 to Version 1.3 of the certification system.

Background

Since the release of the WaterSense Labeled Homes Program in 2009, the labeling, oversight, and quality assurance of the program have been overseen by a Program Administrator and its approved Licensed Certification Providers (LCPs). Although any organization can apply to be a Program Administrator, to date, the EPA has only approved and entered a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with a single Program Administrator, the Residential Energy Services Network (RESNET). In March 2020, RESNET informed the EPA of its intention to initiate several changes to the way it oversees the certification of homes for water efficiency. In part, these changes were undertaken in anticipation of Version 2 of the WaterSense Labeled Homes Program. However, as major revisions to the WaterSense Labeled Homes Program are still outstanding, the EPA is initiating this change to the certification system so that the current Program Administrator, as well as builders, raters, and providers, can continue to support and participate in the WaterSense Labeled Homes Program.

Additionally, both prior to and during the stakeholder engagement process related to the specification development process for Version 2 of the WaterSense Labeled Homes Program, several organizations had contacted the EPA to express their interest in certifying and issuing the WaterSense label to homes. However, these organizations did not meet the organizational requirements in the *WaterSense New Home Certification System, Version 1.2*. These barriers to participation often resulted from organizational differences rather than an inability to effectively oversee the certification process. In addition to allowing the existing Program Administrator to continue its involvement in the program, this revision to the *WaterSense Home Certification System* will allow additional certifying organizations to participate. The EPA intends to increase the options available to stakeholders in the certification and building industries while ensuring the integrity of the third-party certification process.

This revision also brings WaterSense in better alignment with the requirements ENERGY STAR® has for Home Certification Organizations, increasing consistency between the programs and facilitating industry stakeholder participation.

Summary of Changes

Similar to Version 1.2 of the certification system, the *WaterSense Home Certification System, Version 1.3* outlines the requirements, roles, and responsibilities for all parties involved in the construction, verification, certification, and labeling of homes for WaterSense. Under Version 1.3, Home Certification Organizations (HCOs) are central to the certification process and are responsible for implementing a process for the verification, certification, and labeling of homes that meet the requirements in the *WaterSense Specification for Homes*. Prospective HCOs are required to meet the following requirements to be approved by the EPA to certify homes to meet the WaterSense specification:

- Independent Oversight
- Quality Assurance
- Verifier Training and Authorization
- Home Verification Protocols
- Impartiality
- Messaging and Reporting

The *WaterSense Home Certification System, Version 1.3* also outlines the application process for prospective HCOs and procedures for the EPA's oversight of the process.

In addition, the *WaterSense Home Certification System, Version 1.3* includes several changes that affect LCPs. Under Version 1.2 of the certification system, LCPs had the authority to train inspectors, oversee home inspections, and issue final certification decisions on homes. Under the *WaterSense Home Certification System, Version 1.3*, the HCO retains responsibility for most of these roles. However, HCOs may delegate certain responsibilities associated with training, verifying, certifying, and/or overseeing the verification and/or certification of WaterSense labeled homes to a designee(s). HCOs such as RESNET that use a provider structure may continue to use existing LCPs (or "WaterSense providers") as designees.

Table 1 summarizes updates to the roles and processes in the *WaterSense Home Certification System, Version 1.3*.

Table 1: Comparison of Stakeholder Roles and Responsibilities as Identified in Version 1.2 and Version 1.3 of the *WaterSense Home Certification System*

Role	Version 1.2	Version 1.3
Develop criteria for certification and labeling of homes for WaterSense	EPA	EPA
Build homes in accordance with the specification	Builder partners	Builder partners
Oversee the certification process	Program Administrator	HCO
Issue the WaterSense label	LCP	HCO
Train quality assurance designees (QADs)	EPA	Not applicable*
Perform quality assurance	LCP	HCO*
Conduct physical inspection/verification	Water efficiency inspector	WaterSense home verifier
Train water efficiency inspectors/WaterSense home verifiers	Offered by a self-selected group of LCPs**	HCO
Report information on WaterSense labeled homes and water efficiency inspectors/WaterSense home verifiers	LCPs report data on WaterSense labeled homes quarterly; there are no requirements to report information on individual water efficiency inspectors	HCOs report at least quarterly
Publish directory of individual water efficiency inspectors/WaterSense home verifiers	Not available	EPA to make a directory available on the WaterSense website

* HCOs may utilize a designee(s), such as a provider network, to meet certain organizational requirements, including quality assurance. HCOs will be responsible for providing quality assurance training to designee(s).

** In prior versions, all providers were authorized to conduct this training, but only some chose to make this training available.

As part of the certification system revisions, the EPA has revised terminology used within the WaterSense Labeled Homes Program. While the EPA strives to update all its materials and resources, this is not always possible or cost-effective. The EPA has not updated terminology in all its documents, because this update is considered minor and because the EPA is still considering program updates as described in the draft documents associated with Version 2 of the WaterSense Labeled Homes Program. As a result, within existing technical resources

meant to support the design, construction, and verification of homes to the specification, use of these terms should be considered interchangeable. Table 2 displays the updates to these program terms.

Table 2: Changes to Terminology for the WaterSense Labeled Homes Program

Term Used in Previous Versions of the WaterSense Labeled Homes Program	Term Updated for the <i>WaterSense Home Certification System, Version 1.3</i>
Water efficiency inspector	WaterSense home verifier
Program Administrator	Home Certification Organization (HCO)
Licensed Certification Provider	Designee(s)*
Inspection	Verification

* As discussed above, HCOs can use LCPs as designees.

Transition Period

The EPA will work with its existing Program Administrator, RESNET, to establish a fair and reasonable timeline to transition to the *WaterSense Home Certification System, Version 1.3*. The EPA anticipates that this process will be complete by the end of 2020. Existing LCPs will be able to continue operating under Version 1.2 of the certification system until then and should look for communication from RESNET containing more details.

Effective as of this document’s release, new prospective HCOs may apply for approval to certify and label homes for WaterSense under the *WaterSense Home Certification System, Version 1.3* by completing the [Application for Home Certification Organization \(HCO\) Approval](#). The EPA will include information about approved HCOs on the WaterSense website and will post information about WaterSense home verifiers in an online directory of approved verifiers.