

New Water Heater Standards

New Federal manufacturing rules for residential [water heater energy-efficiency standards](#) went into effect April 16 that will require changes to the installation of many residential water heaters. Most water heaters with a capacity of 55 gallons or less will require more installation space, and those larger than 55 gallons in capacity will see additional, more significant changes. However, products manufactured before April 16 can still be bought and installed after the changeover date.

These standards could affect the product the builder installs. The more common-sized water heaters of 55 gallons or less will likely be larger by roughly 2 inches in height and diameter to account for the additional insulation needed to meet the new standard. This may require builders to account for the increased size in their design. It is expected that replacement water heaters installed in closets will present the biggest problems: They may require installing an appliance with reduced water capacity, selecting a much taller tank of the same diameter or a switching to a tankless water heater if space does not allow for a simple change-out. Water heaters above 55 gallons will change dramatically. Basically, the minimum standard for these larger units will be a heat pump water heater or a condensing gas water heater. These are the ones that will have the large price increases. Keep in mind, that these larger units represent a very small portion of the water heater market. Most homes utilize 55 gallons or less and the builder also has the option of installing multiple smaller units to keep the cost down too.

Manufacturers, distributors, and contractors may continue to sell products manufactured prior to this date for an indefinite period of time so there should be no impact on availability.

It's important for builders and installers to become familiar with the new rules and the technology options so that they can offer customers the best solutions for placement and capacity. Water heater manufacturers are working to get the word out and have updated their websites with the latest information. Contact Donald Surrena at 800-368-5242 x8574 or via email at dsurrena@nahb.org or Bettie Sleeth at 678-468-9900 or bsleeth@hbag.org