

BILL ANALYSIS

H.B. 489
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Natural Resources
Committee Report (Amended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

The United States Department of Energy (DOE) established new energy efficiency standards for residential clothes washers in 2001. The energy standard is likely to result in water savings as well as energy savings but DOE did not have the authority to set standards for commercial machines.

This bill establishes an energy efficiency standard (MEF) for commercial machines. The legislation also sets a water efficiency standard (WF) to ensure water savings will be achieved. By setting this energy standard, the bill will help achieve significant energy and water savings, contributing to improving the state's air quality and preserving the state's limited water resources.

Requiring an increase in efficiency from the older, more wasteful technologies commonly found in laundromats and public laundry rooms to the newer, more efficient technologies would result in a savings of 40 percent less energy and 50 percent less water across the state. These gains are particularly important in the commercial sector, which although it is smaller than the residential sector, has much higher usage rates per machine, multiplying the benefits.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, department, agency, or institution.

ANALYSIS

H.B. 489 defines a commercial clothes washing machine as one designed for commercial use that has a capacity of less than 3.5 cubic feet for front-loading machines and more than 1.6 cubic feet for top-loading machines. The bill prohibits the sale or distribution of commercial clothes washers in Texas that do not meet the standards set forth in the bill. The bill sets forth standards which require a washer to meet certain water and energy saving performance standards and be listed by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) as provided in Subsection (c).

H.B. 489 also requires the TCEQ to maintain a list of commercial clothes washing machines certified to the commission by the manufacturer or importer as meeting the standards set forth in the bill. The TCEQ may include commercial clothes washers on the list that are certified by the Consortium for Energy Efficiency, Inc., to meet the standards set forth in the bill. The agency may also test the washers to determine the accuracy of the certification and shall remove any washers that do not meet this standard. The TCEQ may assess a reasonable fee to be deposited in the water resources management account for this inspection to determine the accuracy of the certification.

The bill excludes commercial clothes washing machines that are in the inventory of or have been ordered by a commercial clothes-washing machine retailer, distributor, lessor, or importer as of the effective date of the Act.

EFFECTIVE DATE

January 1, 2004

EXPLANATION OF AMENDMENT

The amendment changes the effective date of the act from January 1, 2004 to January 1, 2007.

The amendment also changes the modified energy factor requirement from 1.42 cubic feet per kilowatt-hours per cycle to 1.26 cubic feet per kilowatt-hours per cycle.