

Calif. advances tough flat-screen energy standards

September 19 2009, By SAMANTHA YOUNG , Associated Press
Writer

(AP) -- Energy regulators on Friday moved forward with a plan that could ban the sale of the most power-hungry televisions from California retail stores.

The California Energy Commission released what it hopes will be the nation's first energy-efficiency requirements for the flat-screen TVs. A final vote on the regulation is expected in November.

If the commission adopts the new rules, beginning in 2011, California retailers would be able to sell only TVs that meet the guidelines of the voluntary federal Energy Star program.

Commission spokeswoman Susanne Garfield-Jones said at least 850 models already meet the standards.

"The energy savings can be huge given that we have about 35 million TVs in the state, and we sell about 4 million each year," Garfield-Jones said.

California has previously set efficiency requirements on dishwashers, washing machines and other household appliances as a way to confront the state's growing electricity demand. Regulators turned their attention 18 months ago to TVs, which they say are not only growing in size and electricity use but are being watched more at home.

Televisions hooked up to DVRs, DVD players, and cable or satellite boxes now consume about 10 percent of a home's electricity, according to the Energy Commission. While the energy savings of each TV set will vary depending on the size and model, the 2011 standards are expected to reduce energy consumption by about one-third. Tougher standards in 2013 would reduce [energy consumption](#) by nearly half.

Industry leaders say the standards could limit consumer choice, stifle the kind of innovation that has improved TV picture quality over the years, and drive California shoppers to the Internet or out of state.

"Independent studies show millions in tax revenue and thousands of jobs are at stake," said Doug Johnson, senior director of technology policy at the Consumer Electronics Association.

The industry has argued the standards would leave Californians with TVs that have poorer picture quality and fewer features than those sold elsewhere in the United States.

In concession to independent retailers that sell large, high-end home-theater TVs, regulators scaled back their initial proposal to exempt TV sets larger than 58 inches. That drew the ire of at least one environmental group that has lobbied for the standards.

"These are the SUVs of the industry," said Noah Horowitz, a senior scientist at the Natural Resources Defense Council. "They use more energy than the smaller ones. They are used in bars, hotels, and can easily be on for 12 hours a day."

Energy spokeswoman Garfield-Jones said the larger sets account for 2 to 3 percent of the market and regulators intend to set standards for them at a later date.

The average plasma TV uses more than three times as much energy as an old cathode-ray tube set, and a 48-inch plasma TV can draw more power than a large refrigerator - even if the set is used only a few hours a day, regulators say.

Liquid-crystal display, or LCD, TVs guzzle less - about 43 percent more energy than tube sets, according to a study by Pacific Gas & Electric Co. LCDs now account for about 90 percent of the 4 million TVs sold in California annually.

On the Net:

[California Energy Commission: http://www.energy.ca.gov](http://www.energy.ca.gov)

The Consumer Electronics Association: <http://www.ce.org>

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