



Written by [Michael Tennant](#) on July 21, 2015

Obama's Costly Dishwasher Rules Could Make Americans Dishpan Handlers

Having saddled Americans with toilets that don't flush, the federal government is now preparing to force them to use dishwashers that don't wash, a move that government and industry forecasts agree will harm both consumers and the dishwasher industry. Moreover, the new regulations could end up harming rather than helping the environment, the very opposite of their stated *raison d'être*.



This is actually the second round of dishwasher regulations issued by the Obama Department of Energy (DOE). The first, in 2012, added \$44 to the cost of the average machine, according to DOE estimates. The new regulations, which would require energy usage to drop another 24 percent and water usage to fall 38 percent, will pile on an additional \$99, the DOE says.

The Obama administration, naturally, claims that these regulations will benefit the environment and stave off the supposed threat of climate change. "When it released the proposal in December, the DOE estimated that it would save 240 billion gallons over a 30-year period and reduce energy consumption by 12 percent," reported [The Hill](#), adding that "the carbon savings alone would bring billions of dollars in environmental benefits, the administration argued."

The people who actually make dishwashers, who say they were not even consulted about the proposed regulations, beg to differ. The Association of Home Appliance Manufacturers (AHAM) calculates that the new rules would require a load of dishes to be washed in just 3.1 gallons of water, an amount that is simply insufficient to do the job. Some of the group's members tried changing their existing models to meet the DOE's new standards, then ran some dirty dishes through them. According to an AHAM [press release](#), "The testing revealed a build-up of film, fats and grease on dishes at the end of the cycle."

"They found some stuff that was pretty disgusting," Rob McAver, AHAM's head lobbyist, told [The Hill](#).

Another thing consumers won't like about their new Obama-approved dishwashers is that they will have a longer run cycle necessitated by decreases in "dishwashing temperatures and mechanics ... to meet stringent energy conservation standards," AHAM said in a [March press release](#).

"As a result of the proposed standards, it is highly likely that consumers will pre-wash dishes or choose to repeat dishwasher cycles, thereby erasing any energy or water savings," the group stated. Even hand-washing, the only other alternative, won't help. "Individuals who forego purchasing a dishwasher because of higher upfront costs will use between 67 and 210 percent more energy and between 250 and 450 percent more water," the George Washington University Regulatory Studies Center [found](#). Indeed, noted AHAM, "DOE's forecasting models show water usage would actually *increase* by some 63 billion gallons due to product impact and altered consumer behavior." (Emphasis in original.)

The Obama administration argues that while its new rules would make dishwashers cost more initially, consumers will recoup those costs in the form of lower utility bills over the lifetime of the appliance.



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“After accounting for the time value of money, its own calculations show that the typical consumer requires nine years to recoup the added cost in bill savings,” according to a *U.S. News and World Report* [op-ed](#). “Over half — 53 percent — of all purchasers will never recover the higher upfront costs, and consumers save only \$21 on average during the lifespan of a typical dishwasher.”

Senior citizens and the poor will bear the brunt of the higher costs, the article continued. “Senior-only households, whose dishwashers operate less frequently, can expect to wait more than 11 years to recoup the new cost premium in utility bill savings, two years more than average. Savings to these seniors average a meager \$1, and 64 percent of these older customers can expect to spend more money on the dishwasher than they get back in lower energy bills. The corresponding figure for low-income users is 59 percent, as calculated by the Department of Energy.”

AHAM’s analysis indicates that it will actually take 20 years for a consumer to recover the additional cost, “longer than most consumers live in their home and longer than the expected life of the dishwasher.” The group claims that “over 70 percent of consumers could experience a net financial loss when purchasing a product that meets the proposed levels.”

The reduction in dishwasher purchases that is certain to occur as a result of the proposed regulations won’t just harm consumers by making them pay more or wash dishes by hand; it will also damage the dishwasher industry. The administration expects dishwasher manufacturers to lose up to 34.7 percent of their value under the new rules; AHAM forecasts the loss as high as 80 percent. Yet the DOE says it doesn’t foresee any significant plant closings or job losses in the industry.

“It’s an amazing industry that can lose over a third of its sales yet keep all its workers,” former Oklahoma Congressman Ernest Istook, president of Americans for Less Regulation, observed in a *Washington Times* [piece](#).

On top of all that, by the administration’s own estimates, the regulations’ costs (which the DOE is probably underestimating) exceed their alleged environmental benefits (which are almost certainly overstated) by nearly \$5 billion, *U.S. News* pointed out.

“The benefit to the environment does not justify the additional cost to consumers and manufacturers,” said AHAM.

The government may yet listen to the dishwasher industry, particularly after being given a firsthand look at the results of AHAM’s dishwasher tests by McAver, who “suspects the DOE is pushing the rules to try and [sic] meet President Obama’s greenhouse gas emissions goals under the Climate Action Plan, his second-term climate change initiative,” penned *The Hill*.

Giving ear to those most affected by the proposed rules would be a good thing. Better still would be abandoning these and all other unconstitutional regulations and letting consumers, not bureaucrats, decide which products to buy. Why should Americans — but not their dirty dishes — be soaked to satisfy politicians’ and bureaucrats’ pet agendas, most of which are all wet?



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