

April 5, 2012

The Honorable Stephen Chu
Secretary
United States Department of Energy
1000 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20585

Dear Secretary Chu,

The undersigned organizations write to request an extension of the comment period for the *Guidelines for Home Energy Professionals: Standard Work Specifications for Single Family Energy Upgrades* (formerly known as the *Workforce Guidelines for Home Energy Upgrades*). According to the notice posted in the March 29, 2012, Federal Register comments for this public review are due on April 11, 2012. Due to the imminent due date for comments, we request that you expedite a response, preferably by April 9, 2012.

The 15 days allocated to review the 267 page *Guidelines* document and prepare comments is unacceptable considering the revisions and scope of changes since the last version was released.

Comment periods for previously released versions the *Guidelines* allowed more time for review. The initial public review of the *Workforce Guidelines for Home Energy Upgrades* had a 30 day review process that generated nearly 1,000 unique comments. The “industry technical review” that occurred in the summer of 2011 allowed invited stakeholders more than 60 days to review the updated version and provide comments.

Commentors need more than 15 days to read through this latest version which appears to have had substantial edits in content and reformatting of the individual sections. The Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy did not provide “strikethroughs” with this version (or any other previous version), making it difficult to see what comments were accepted or rejected in context. A spreadsheet document provided by NREL purporting to show “the responses to comments received during the Summer 2011 review session” does not align with section numbers of the November 9, 2010 Public Review version or the “industry technical review” draft released on June 28, 2011. In some cases, the spreadsheet document responses report that sections “have been revised entirely.”

In addition, many issues in the original 674 page document were identified by commenters in the previous review that were in direct conflict with fire and other safety provisions covered by the International Residential Code, a code adopted throughout the

United States to assure basic safety of one and two family dwellings. In almost every instance, these critical safety concerns have been noted as “Accepted with modification” accompanied by the following “reason”: “The entire document has undergone a rigorous code review and the International Residential Code has been referenced where applicable.”

Given the fact that the original document was clearly produced by individuals or groups with no working knowledge of the building safety code used throughout the United States, and the fact that there is no identification of who or what organization conducted the “rigorous code review,” it is completely unacceptable that DOE is offering less than two weeks to review a document that in its original version could have posed significant safety risks, in violation of current minimum building safety code requirements contained in the International Residential Code.

Beyond tracking potential changes from the previous version, DOE specifically requests comments on the reformatting of the document. This request is nearly impossible to comply with when there is no continuity between versions of the documents. There are no page numbers in the latest version and the section numbering systems have changed with each revision. DOE also seeks comments on several specific issues of significance, including the removal of the Job Task Analyses (not included with the public notice), and alignment with the International Residential Code and other applicable standards.

As noted above, it is not for the convenience of commenters that we primarily seek to extend the comment period, but for the much more important reason of protecting the public from the possibility of safety hazards which may result from failure to make the document consistent with the minimum safety requirements of the International Residential code and the numerous safety standards that are referenced within the Code.

We urge you to extend the review period until at least June 5, 2012, in order to provide the public adequate time to review and comment on the *Guidelines for Home Energy Professionals: Standard Work Specifications for Single Family Energy Upgrades*. This would represent a full 60 day review period while providing stakeholders already in the process of reviewing and drafting comments to the industry review of the *Standard Work Specifications for Multifamily Energy Upgrades* time to meet its May 4, 2012, comment deadline.

We would also request that DOE make the comments of all commenters accessible, just as they are in a standard rulemaking docket, in the “online comment tool.” When the guidelines deal with issues related to safety and public health, it is unacceptable that the comments can only be seen by DOE, and not by other members of the public who are potentially impacted by these Guidelines. It is clearly a step backward from the usual DOE practice of allowing public access to rulemaking dockets, including the comments of other members of the public, to use the NREL “Online Comment Tool” as a means to prevent public scrutiny of these guidelines, and the issues that potentially impact every homeowner in the United States.

Air Conditioning Contractors of America
Air-Conditioning, Heating, and Refrigeration Institute
American Gas Association
Heating, Air-conditioning & Refrigeration Distributors International
Indoor Air Quality Association (IAQA)
International Association of Plumbing and Mechanical Officials
International Code Council
North American Technician Excellence, Inc.
National Lumber and Building Materials Dealers Association
National Association of Home Builders
Plumbing-Heating-Cooling Contractors Association
Refrigeration Service Engineers Society
Residential Energy Services Network (RESNET)
Window and Door Manufacturers Association

Cc: Acting Assistant Secretary Henry Kelly
Deputy Assistant Secretary for Energy Efficiency Kathleen Hogan