

# WaterSense®

# Labeled Homes

INTRODUCTORY GUIDE



# Welcome Home!

We hope this guide will help you understand how WaterSense labeled homes can make a positive impact on your community. Choosing a WaterSense labeled home means making an investment in the future—an investment that saves water and energy in your community, protects resources for future generations, and can help save hundreds of dollars per year in utility bills compared to typical new construction.

## THE PURPOSE

This guide is designed to provide an introduction to the WaterSense labeled homes program and the certification process. The content will provide an overview of the benefits of engaging in the program, steps to achieve WaterSense certification, and ways that stakeholders can get involved.

## WHO IS THIS FOR?

This resource is for anyone who wants to learn about building, certifying, or buying WaterSense labeled homes. Whether you are a utility, homeowner, builder, or verifier, this guide will help you understand the components of a WaterSense labeled home and provide a roadmap for connecting with the appropriate professionals to achieve certification.

### DIG DEEPER!

**Learn more** with WaterSense's detailed specification and certification materials, technical and marketing resources, and more!  
[www.epa.gov/watersense/homes](http://www.epa.gov/watersense/homes)

## Did you know?

On average, a **WaterSense labeled home** can save...

**more than \$700** in water and electricity costs and **50,000 gallons** of water per year!

The infographic features a house with a callout bubble showing a toilet and a sink. A circular seal with a water drop and the text 'WaterSense Made by EPA Office' is positioned above the fixtures. A small 'We verify' logo is at the bottom of the house illustration.

# Why WaterSense?

## WATERSENSE LABELED HOMES: THE BENEFITS

The WaterSense label can help efficient homes stand out in a competitive high-performance building marketplace. WaterSense labeled homes capitalize on consumer demand by offering homeowners a whole-house solution that helps save water, energy, and money while maintaining a high level of performance. Homeowners can save more than \$700 in utility bills and reduce water use by up to 50,000 gallons annually.

### FREE OF LEAKS

Homes are verified to be free of visible water leaks both inside and out, reducing water waste and preventing potentially costly damage.



### SAVINGS THAT PERFORM

WaterSense labeled toilets, showerheads, and bathroom sink faucets are required in every labeled home. These fixtures are independently certified to use less water and perform as well or better than standard models.



### PEACE OF MIND

WaterSense labeled homes are independently certified to meet EPA's criteria for efficiency and performance.



### FLEXIBILITY IN MEETING EFFICIENCY

Applying a whole-house building science approach gives builders the freedom to select the most cost-effective solutions in their market without sacrificing water savings.



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# What's in a WaterSense Labeled Home?

All WaterSense labeled homes are independently certified to meet EPA's criteria for both efficiency and performance.



## MANDATORY CHECKLIST TO ENSURE QUALITY PERFORMANCE

### LEAKS

- Pressure-loss test on all water supplies detects no leaks
- Free of visible leaks from all fixtures and appliances at point of use or point of connection to water distribution system
  - Toilets
  - Bathroom faucets
  - Showerheads
  - Bathroom tub faucets, i.e., tub spouts
  - Kitchen and other sink faucets
  - Other fixtures or appliances (e.g., water heaters, clothes washers, dishwashers)

### WATERSENSE LABELED PLUMBING FIXTURES

- Toilets
- Bathroom sink faucets
- Showerheads



## EFFICIENCY REQUIREMENT

### VERIFIED EFFICIENCY

- At least **30 percent** more water-efficient than a typical new home (based on national standards and common design and landscape practices).

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# EPA Approved HCOs

EPA approved Home Certification Organizations (HCOs) go through an application and approval process to ensure they have the organizational infrastructure to oversee the certification of homes. They are also responsible for overseeing and training verifiers. As part of the application process, a technical evaluation of their chosen method of measuring water efficiency is carried out. EPA verifies that all methodologies can accurately and consistently identify homes that are at least 30 percent more water-efficient than a typical new home.



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Once approved, these methods are referred to as WaterSense Approved Certification Methods (WACMs), which outline the requirements for a home to meet the WaterSense efficiency requirement. HCOs carry out other responsibilities as well, including but not limited to:



**Certification.** HCOs have authority over the decision to certify a home and issue the WaterSense label.



**Training.** HCOs train and authorize WaterSense home verifiers to verify homes in accordance with the requirements established by EPA and the HCO's WACM.



**Reporting.** HCOs submit quarterly reports to EPA providing details on certified homes and authorized WaterSense home verifiers.

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It is important to understand the requirements of an HCO's WACM when pursuing WaterSense certification, as each method has distinct ways of measuring water efficiency. Features that can contribute to improved water efficiency may include:

- WaterSense labeled plumbing products and high-efficiency kitchen faucets
- ENERGY STAR certified clothes washers and dishwashers
- Efficient hot water delivery
- Landscape size, design, and plant selection
- Irrigation design and technology, including use of WaterSense labeled irrigation products
- Landscape design or audit by WaterSense Irrigation Professional

Builders have the flexibility to select an HCO and WACM that best fits their needs and works with their existing certifications (if applicable). An overview of EPA approved HCOs is included on the next page. More information about their associated WACMs can be found at:

[www.epa.gov/watersense/homes-certification](http://www.epa.gov/watersense/homes-certification)

# Overview of EPA Approved HCOs

HCO	SCOPE			METHOD FOR LABELING HOMES
	REGIONALITY	BUILDING TYPES	CONSTRUCTION TYPE	
		Single-Family 	New Construction 	Achieve a score of 70 or less under CHEERS WaterSense
		Single-Family 	New & Existing Construction 	Achieve a score of 66 or less under the Water Efficiency Rating Score (WERS) with WaterSense Baselines
		Single-Family & Multifamily 	New & Existing Construction 	Complete a set of selected practices from the National Green Building Standard (NGBS)
			New Construction 	Achieve a score of 64 or less under the Water Rating Index
		Single-Family 	New & Existing Construction 	Achieve a score of 70 or less under HERS <sub>H2O</sub>

HCOs listed have been approved as of August 2022. For more information and the latest list of EPA approved HCOs, please visit [www.epa.gov/watersense/homes-certification](http://www.epa.gov/watersense/homes-certification).

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# Home Verifiers

## Boots on the Ground

Verifiers serve a critical role in the WaterSense labeled homes program. They are responsible for verifying that homes meet the Mandatory Checklist and water efficiency requirement. WaterSense verification is a simple process that can be done in one to two hours during a single site visit. If a verifier identifies issues, they work with builders to resolve the problem before the home earns the WaterSense label. Verifiers can also help guide builders through the certification process.

## Becoming a WaterSense Home Verifier

Verifiers can be independent or associated with home rating companies. Individuals interested in becoming a WaterSense home verifier should contact an HCO to obtain the required training. Training covers important information on the *WaterSense Specification for Homes* and the HCO's WACM. Once training is complete, the HCO will formally authorize a verifier, meaning they can offer WaterSense verification services.

## Promoting WaterSense Verification



Verifiers also perform an important role in marketing WaterSense certification to builders, which includes communicating the benefits of the WaterSense label and the home's potential water, energy, and associated cost savings. WaterSense provides verifiers with a promotional mark that includes the WaterSense label. Verifiers may use this mark on their marketing materials.

WaterSense designed its specification to complement the criteria for other green home certification programs, which makes it easy to integrate the WaterSense verification into home rating site visits. This minimizes additional time and expense for builders, and allows verifiers to check a home's water- and energy-efficiency features during the same site visit. Whether as a stand-alone certification or as an add-on to other green certifications, the WaterSense label adds value for both verifiers and builders.



**FIND A HOME VERIFIER**

Verifiers who have been trained and authorized by an HCO are listed on the WaterSense Verifier Search Tool. Use this tool to identify local verifiers who can assist with WaterSense certification.

[www.epa.gov/watersense/find-home-verifier](http://www.epa.gov/watersense/find-home-verifier)

# Ready to Get Started?

Adding the WaterSense label—an independent certification backed by the EPA for both savings and performance—helps provide assurance to home buyers in a competitive market where certifications matter and consumers are looking for efficient homes. You can open the door to savings with WaterSense labeled homes. Here's how:

## BUILDERS

- **Partner with WaterSense!** Partnership is free and required for any builder who wants to earn the WaterSense label. Simply fill out WaterSense's brief online partnership agreement at [www.epa.gov/watersense/join-watersense](http://www.epa.gov/watersense/join-watersense).
- **Talk to verifiers** with whom you work and see if they offer WaterSense certification. You can also find a WaterSense home verifier in your area using the WaterSense Verifier Search Tool at [www.epa.gov/watersense/find-home-verifier](http://www.epa.gov/watersense/find-home-verifier).
- **Review the requirements** of the WaterSense Mandatory Checklist found in the WaterSense specification at [www.epa.gov/watersense/homes-specification](http://www.epa.gov/watersense/homes-specification).
- **Ensure you will meet the water efficiency threshold** by working with your verifier to understand the HCO's WaterSense certification requirements.
- **Design, build, certify, and market** WaterSense labeled homes to your buyers.



## VERIFIERS

- **Check the training requirements of your HCO(s).** Every HCO will provide the WaterSense program-specific training as well as their own specific program training.
- **Share opportunities for WaterSense certification** with your builders and market your services as a WaterSense home verifier. Verifiers in good standing will also automatically be listed on the WaterSense Verifier Search Tool.
- **Complete home verifications** to ensure each home meets all of the technical requirements and work with your builders to help them achieve WaterSense certification.



## UTILITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

- **Become a WaterSense Promotional Partner.** By partnering with WaterSense, you can access exclusive materials to communicate the value of water efficiency to consumers.
- **Incentivize WaterSense labeled homes and products** through rebate programs, reduced connection fees, or expedited permit reviews. These incentives can help encourage builders to pursue water-efficient homes in your service area.
- **Spread the word** about the importance of water efficiency to builders, homebuilder associations, and prospective home buyers. Encourage customers to look for the WaterSense label when purchasing a new home or water-using product. Help consumers learn about additional ways to save water through messaging focused on specific water-efficient practices.

