

Dear NFRC Members and Program Participants:

The Board of Directors for the National Fenestration Rating Council (NFRC) is developing a pilot program to conduct blind product rating verification. The move was prompted by NFRC's desire to be recognized by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as an ENERGY STAR Qualified Certification Body.

In order to gain this recognition, NFRC needs to meet all of the newly enacted rating verification requirements for windows, doors, and skylights under the ENERGY STAR program.

The EPA has reviewed NFRC's current certification program and determined that blind product rating verification is the only missing requirement. NFRC seeks to add this component to its current Product Certification Program to create an exceptional level of confidence in the ENERGY STAR label on its products.

"The development of the pilot program will answer some important questions regarding the feasibility of developing and implementing this kind of rating verification," said NFRC's CEO, Jim Benney. "Creating a viable program for conducting blind product rating verification would bring a positive new dimension to our certification program, ultimately better serving the public."

Significance of Blind Product Rating Verification

Blind product rating verification is important because it verifies that ENERGY STAR qualified and NFRC rated fenestration products sold in the marketplace are consistent with the products listed in the NFRC Certified Products Directory (CPD).

Pilot Program under Development

In an effort to meet EPA's requirement for blind product rating verification, NFRC's Board of Directors will implement a pilot program between the fall of 2011 and spring of 2012. The goal for this program is to determine if the Blind Rating Verification Program adds value to the existing NFRC Product Certification Program (PCP).

Upon completion of the pilot program, NFRC will evaluate the results to determine whether the program should be fully implemented within the PCP.

How the Blind Purchasing Process Would Work

Should the program become fully implemented, individual fenestration products would be purchased annually by NFRC. The actual percentage of products NFRC would purchase would fluctuate as determined appropriate by NFRC and the EPA. Such purchases would be conducted with no involvement from the manufacturer and would be facilitated by purchasing through a variety of agents or contractors, purchasing through the customers of a manufacturer, and/or by purchasing directly from a distributor or retailer.

Additionally, the fenestration products would be ordered randomly with any product eligible for selection, but with more attention focused on specific product categories. Those product categories would be established by NFRC staff with input from the Certification Policy Committee, the EPA and/or the DOE, and Independent Certification and Inspection Agencies.

“We’re confident this pilot program will be successful, and we’re looking forward to getting it underway,” Benney concluded. “The development of an effective and efficient means for blind product rating verification will ensure that NFRC can be recognized as an ENERGY STAR qualified Certification Body with the EPA, and that’s good news for consumers.”

More details about this program will be revealed to the membership and program participants as they are developed.