SESSION 3D

BEHAVIORAL INSIGHTS FOR ENERGY-EFFICIENCY PROGRAM DESIGN—LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE PAST, PROMISING NEW DIRECTIONS, AND SPECIAL EVALUATION REQUIREMENTS

Moderator: Patricia Gonzales, Ph.D., Project Manager, NYSERDA, Albany NY

PANELISTS:

Loren Lutzenhiser, Ph.D., Professor, Portland State University, Portland OR
Jane S. Peters, Ph.D., President, Research Into Action, Inc., Portland OR
Karen Ehrhardt-Martinez, Ph.D., Research Associate, ACEEE, Washington DC

SUMMARY DESCRIPTION:

This panel will introduce attendees to key findings from empirical research in the social sciences that are useful for describing and predicting human behavior. The discussion will draw upon the panelists' rich backgrounds and expertise in social science research and in designing and evaluating energy-efficiency programs. The panelists are in agreement that behavioral insights from empirical social science research represent an underutilized resource in influencing energy-efficiency behaviors. However, each panelist brings a unique perspective and the panel discussion promises to be equally interesting and relevant to energy-efficiency program designers, evaluators, and policy makers. The three panelists have recently completed white papers for the CPUC and CIEE behavior paper series which can be downloaded at http://ciee.ucop.edu/energyeff/behavior.html

Some of the questions that will be posed to the panelists include:

1. What are the key behavioral levers for influencing customer energy behaviors? Do these vary significantly by sector? Are residential customers more "predictably irrational" than commercial customers?
2. *Influence, Predictably Irrational*, and *Nudge* cite norm messaging, loss aversion, and status quo bias, as strong levers for influencing human behavior. What has been the success of applying these insights to programs intended to encourage energy conservation and investments in renewable energy? Have some of these truisms of human behavior been used more effectively to sell products in other industries? Please give us some examples.
3. Why haven't these levers been fully exploited by energy-efficiency program administrators in designing and delivering energy-efficiency programs? What are the structural, financial, and programmatic, and/or other impediments to successfully harnessing behavioral approaches? Would it require changing the way energy-efficiency programs are administered? If so, in what way? What are the special evaluation requirements, if any, for evaluating the effect of behavioral vs. more traditional energy-efficiency program approaches?
4. If there is little connection between what people say is important to them (like supporting social programs and saving energy to protect the environment) and what people are willing to invest in (like donating to a worthy cause or paying for energy-efficiency improvements in their homes and businesses), why is so much attention given to attitudinal and market characterization studies? Why don't energy-efficiency program administrators just hire a good marketing firm to advertize their programs?
5. What is the role for research in this area?