

Who's Afraid of a Swamp Cooler? Addressing Market Barriers to Evaporative Cooling

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Evaporative Cooling Rebate Programs have been designed and implemented in several Southwestern states to transform the residential cooling equipment market away from central air conditioning. Cadmus gathered customer feedback through evaluations that included investigation of market barriers and customers perceptions of evaporative coolers (EC). Findings from these evaluations support the conclusion that evaporative cooling programs face substantial non-financial market barriers, specifically, customer lack of information, misperceptions and preconceived attitudes. Despite negative incremental costs, significant market barriers still exist for evaporative coolers (e.g., concerns over product performance and excessive moisture in the home), and utilities are struggling to meet participation goals. This poster provides insight into potential market segments inclined toward evaporative cooling and effective education and marketing approaches to promoting this efficient yet underutilized technology.

Address barriers through effective marketing for Evaporative Cooling

- Focus messaging on Non-Energy Benefits
- Challenge misperceptions based on earlier EC technologies (that no longer apply)
- Target education to HOAs and building trades (support from a new law in Colorado)
- Promote seasonal savings compared to CAC operating costs
- Focus on existing homes and contractors that serve them
- Promote lower installation costs for homes without ducts
- Provide tiered incentives for new EC installation at a higher level than replacements
- Consider supplementing programs with maintenance and installation services
- Consider 'upstream' incentives and education for EC suppliers and trades
- Cross-promote EC where other programs such as home energy audits intersect