

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-23-105673](#), a report to congressional requesters

Why GAO Did This Study

The federal government is the single largest energy consumer in the United States. In fiscal year 2021, its roughly 350,000 buildings used more than 344 trillion Btu of energy and 119 billion gallons of water, according to DOE data. For decades, the federal government has taken steps to improve energy and water efficiency at federal facilities, including through laws and executive orders. In particular, six requirements from section 432 of the Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007, as amended, relate to the use of energy and water efficiency measures in federal facilities.

GAO was asked to review issues related to agency compliance with these energy and water efficiency requirements. This report examines (1) the extent to which agencies are complying with the six energy and water efficiency requirements and (2) the successes and challenges that selected agencies have encountered in their efforts toward meeting these requirements.

GAO reviewed DOE data on agency performance in meeting requirements; interviewed officials from six federal agencies, selected in part for facility size and energy use; and conducted a literature review.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that DOE track performance toward meeting the requirements from DOE guidance to (1) enter water use data into a benchmarking system and (2) follow up on implemented energy and water efficiency and conservation measures within 4 years. DOE concurred with GAO's recommendations.

View [GAO-23-105673](#). For more information, contact Frank Rusco at (202) 512-3841 or ruscof@gao.gov.

December 2022

FEDERAL ENERGY AND WATER MANAGEMENT

Agencies Report Mixed Success in Meeting Efficiency Requirements, and Additional Data Are Needed

What GAO Found

According to data from fiscal year 2021, federal agencies have a mixed record meeting the six energy and water efficiency requirements that GAO reviewed. There are 27 agencies that use the Department of Energy (DOE) Compliance Tracking System to report data on their performance in meeting these requirements. These data show that most agencies met, or almost met, two of the requirements and did not meet one requirement. GAO could not determine whether agencies fully met the other three requirements due to a lack of data, either because the implementation deadline had not passed and there were not yet available data, or because DOE does not track performance (see table).

Specifically, DOE does not track whether agencies entered water use data into a benchmarking system or followed up on implemented energy and water efficiency and conservation measures (ECM) within 4 years, as called for by DOE guidance. As a result, decision makers cannot be certain that agency officials are benchmarking water use data and measuring energy and water savings from implemented ECMs. Without tracking performance on these requirements, Congress cannot know the extent to which agencies have the data they need to make effective decisions to improve energy and water efficiency.

Agencies' Performance in Meeting Six Energy and Water Efficiency Requirements, Fiscal Year 2021

Requirement	Number of agencies that met requirement	Percent of agencies that met requirement
Identify covered facilities constituting at least 75 percent of facility energy or water use	24 of 27	88.9
Designate energy managers for covered facilities	24 of 27	88.9
Conduct evaluations at covered facilities every 4 years, subject to exception	1 of 27	3.7
Enter data into a benchmarking system	--	--
Enter energy use data into a benchmarking system	7 of 27	25.9
Enter water use data into a benchmarking system	Agency performance not tracked	
Implement energy and water conservation measures	Agency performance not yet available	
Follow up on energy and water conservation measures	Agency performance not tracked	

Source: GAO analysis of Department of Energy (DOE) Compliance Tracking System data. | GAO-23-105673

Note: Data are as of August 24, 2022. This table summarizes relevant requirements from 42 U.S.C. § 8253(f) and DOE guidance. For more details, see table 1 in this report.

Officials GAO interviewed from selected agencies cited varied successes and challenges to meeting each of the six requirements, but the two most frequently cited were the success of using automated or centralized data and the challenge of insufficient resources. For example, agency officials told GAO that automated data allowed them to automatically upload data into a benchmarking system, rather than entering the data manually. Conversely, officials told GAO that insufficient funding or staffing made meeting the requirements challenging. Officials from one agency explained that they must conduct evaluations at agency facilities in remote locations. This makes evaluations more resource-intensive because of the time and expense of sending staff to those locations.