

Highlights of [GAO-10-22](#), a report to congressional committees

Why GAO Did This Study

The federal government is the nation's largest energy consumer. The Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007 (EISA) establishes high-performance federal building requirements that include reducing energy use and managing storm water runoff. The Department of Energy (DOE), General Services Administration (GSA), Office of Management and Budget (OMB), and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) are implementing and, in turn, helping other agencies to implement EISA requirements. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (Recovery Act) provides funding that some agencies can use to carry out EISA high-performance federal building requirements.

This report, required by EISA, addresses (1) what implementing agencies are doing to direct and assist other agencies in meeting key EISA high-performance federal building requirements, (2) how implementing agencies are planning to use Recovery Act funds to meet key requirements, and (3) what challenges implementing and other agencies might face. To do this, GAO reviewed legal materials, guidance, draft energy data, and other documents and interviewed agency officials and stakeholders.

DOE and GSA generally agreed with the report's findings and conclusions and provided written comments. OMB neither agreed nor disagreed with the report and provided technical comments. EPA did not provide comments. Agency comments were incorporated as appropriate.

[View GAO-10-22 or key components.](#)

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October 2009

FEDERAL ENERGY MANAGEMENT

Agencies Are Taking Steps to Meet High-Performance Federal Building Requirements, but Face Challenges

What GAO Found

Implementing agencies—DOE, GSA, OMB, and EPA—are taking steps to meet key EISA high-performance federal building requirements and, in so doing, are assisting and providing direction for other federal agencies toward this end. DOE, for example, has issued guidance for agencies to carry out EISA energy and water management activities and is developing regulations for agencies to reduce the use of energy generated from fossil fuels and to identify a green building certification system for federal buildings—all EISA requirements. However, as DOE officials noted, EISA does not require a certification system to ensure that agencies meet all EISA high-performance federal building requirements, and these systems are not designed to do so. GSA, which acts as the leasing agent for most federal agencies, is incorporating into its federal leases EISA requirements for leasing space with a recent ENERGY STAR label—an energy use rating system—and has established an Office of Federal High-Performance Green Buildings. OMB is incorporating information on agencies' progress in implementing EISA requirements into scorecards it uses to rate agencies' energy and water management. EPA is developing guidance to assist agencies in meeting EISA requirements for managing storm water runoff.

Two implementing agencies—GSA and DOE—are planning to use Recovery Act funds to meet key EISA high-performance federal building requirements. GSA received a \$4 million Recovery Act appropriation to fund its Office of Federal High-Performance Green Buildings and plans to use this funding to hire staff and carry out the office's functions. In addition, GSA received a far larger amount—\$4.5 billion—in Recovery Act funding to convert some GSA facilities to high-performance green buildings. DOE plans to use about \$73 million in Recovery Act funding to collect and manage energy usage data, provide technical assistance, and fund building energy efficiency research. OMB did not receive Recovery Act funds, and while EPA did, the funds were directed for purposes other than implementing EISA high-performance federal building requirements.

Agencies will likely face challenges meeting EISA requirements for (1) increasing energy efficiency and conservation, (2) decreasing and eventually eliminating the use of energy generated from fossil fuels, (3) conducting federal energy and water management activities, and (4) leasing ENERGY STAR rated space. In addition, long-term funding and capital budgeting issues—specifically, requirements for recognizing capital costs up front in the federal budget—present overarching challenges for agencies in meeting all EISA high-performance federal building requirements. According to officials from agencies and stakeholder organizations and GAO's prior work, effective energy management practices, such as ensuring accurate data are collected and monitored, can help agencies address some of these challenges.