

Written Testimony Re: Commercial Building Data Needs

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Submitted by:
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Submitted to:
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To Mr. Holness, Mr. Skaggs, and other members of the Institute,

CLEAResult is an energy efficiency firm that provides consulting services to various clients across the country. I want to thank the Institute for inviting us to submit written testimony on an important issue confronting the building sciences industry today: the scarcity of building energy data in the wake of the failure of the 2007 Commercial Building Energy Consumption Survey (CBECS). Our firm and many others in our industry have built successful energy efficiency programs around the cornerstone of typical building energy performance metrics. Benchmarking plays a key role in helping our program participants determine next steps, such as performing an energy audit or moving forward with an energy improvement project. For the last five years, CBECS has been the primary source of the commercial building data that we have used when benchmarking different types of facilities in different locales. Without it, we will need to rely heavily on older, less relevant data which may inhibit our ability to provide this service in the future.

Since 2006, CLEAResult has benchmarked more than 5,000 different facilities at more than 300 different school districts, municipalities, higher education institutions, and other commercial buildings. To varying extents, every benchmarking report produced by CLEAResult has relied on the availability of public commercial building data to provide comparisons to regional and national norms. The CBECS data most critical to our benchmarking reports is the combination of energy source utility data and basic whole-level building characteristics. The most important building-related information for us is as follows (ranked in order of importance): 1) building type, 2) building square footage, 3) annual heating/cooling degree days (or location of building), 4) occupancy metrics (e.g. number of main-shift workers), 5) year built, and 6) end-use energy amount by function (energy used for cooling, heating, lighting, etc). While CBECS provides an

extensive amount of data which has proven helpful to us on numerous occasions, the aforementioned list is the core data that is most critical to our needs.

Other than CBECS, there is surprisingly little commercial building data that has been made available to the general public. While particular organizations and/or regions have chosen to conduct their own building surveys and in some cases published the results, there is nothing on a national scale that covers such a diversity of facility types. The EPA's Energy Star Portfolio Manager Tool is probably the most well-known national database. (We include Portfolio Manager Scores in each of our benchmarking reports.) However, as it stands right now, the methodology behind the tool relies entirely on CBECS data, the tool does not incorporate user data input into the analysis, and all entered data is private. The industry could benefit from having access to an online source of user-generated building data, similar to what is currently collected in EPA's Portfolio Manager. There would definitely be hurdles to overcome (confidentiality, credibility of the data, etc), but the end result would be less expensive than starting a brand new database.

Regardless of the medium, any published source of building energy data would be beneficial to the energy efficiency industry as a whole. After attending the hearing on July 18th, it appears that industry leaders are in agreement about the importance of establishing an updated buildings database. The real problem appears to be the lack of funding for such an endeavor. We look forward to helping the Institute demonstrate the importance of such a database and acquire funding from various interested parties.

Thank you for taking the time to look into this important issue.

Respectfully yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bill Younger". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Bill Younger

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