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California Energy Commission

**DOCKETED**

**12-HERS-1**

**TN 76022**

**JUL 07 2015**

July 7, 2015

To: California Energy Resources Conservation and Development Commission

Re: Order Instituting Information Proceeding

Docket No. 12-HERS-1

From: CalCERTS, Inc., a California Approved HERS Provider ("CalCERTS")

Comments to the Order Instituting Informational Proceeding

Docket No. 12-HERS-1

## Introduction

Quality Assurance is a vital component of a functioning HERS program in California. Regular review of a Rater's work helps to ensure that the Rater both knows and follows the requirements of Title 24. CalCERTS, Inc has many years of experience performing QA Review, and fully supports a Quality Assurance process. However, we have discovered that, overall, the quotas currently in place can be cumbersome for both Providers and Raters – some high volume Raters qualify for review more than once a month – and that the current rules don't account for changes in technology over the last six years. We have some suggestions for changes to quotas that should offer relief to Providers and Raters, as well as suggestions for additional or alternative methods for completing QA review.

## Proposed Changes to QA Quotas

First and foremost, CalCERTS, Inc. requests an across-the-board reduction of the quota for tested measures. The current requirement is that Providers must test 1%, rounded up, of all measures tested by a Rater in a one year period. This more than tripled the QA requirement faced

by Providers under the previous Title 20 rules and has proven to be financially burdensome, both to CalCERTS, Inc and to the Raters subject to review. This requirement is particularly onerous to high volume Raters who can require review once every 3-4 weeks. With these thoughts in mind we have the following suggestions for ways to reduce the quota to make it more fair to Providers and Raters in general while still ensuring that there is ample opportunity to find, correct, and prevent errors by Raters:

- Reduce the quota from 1% to .5% after the first QA Review on that measure that passes. In other words, one of the first one hundred measures would qualify for review, but after that it would be one of the next two hundred measures, and so on for the remainder of the year.
- Reduce the quota from 1% to .5% for any Rater that has been certified for a year or more, or for Raters that have been certified for more than one code cycle. As expected, we have found that experienced Raters are less likely to fail QA Review, and this change is meant to reflect that fact.
- Place a maximum on the quota, so that high volume Raters who are doing the job correctly are not penalized. For example, requiring no more than 5 QA reviews on any given measure for any given Rater (per year) gives the Provider and Rater ample opportunity to discover any errors in the Rater's process.

CalCERTS would also like to request a reduction in the quota for Associated addresses from 1% to .5%. 1% of all addresses that pass by Association in a Sample Group is a large number as it stands, but there are other aspects of Associated addresses that prove problematic for Providers. The first is that it is extremely difficult to get permission from homeowners to perform a QA Review in addresses that were tested – in addresses that passed by Association not only do you have the usual homeowner concerns, but in many cases they haven't seen a HERS Rater in their home, don't understand their function, and haven't been told by contractors that the Provider may contact them for QA. Another concern relates to the function of QA Review on Associated addresses. This review is done on the Contractor's work since by definition, no Rater has been at this house; however CalCERTS has no oversight on Contractors, and as previously mentioned there is no mechanism in place for contacting them, or jurisdictions, or the CSLB. Although CalCERTS is bound by Title 20 to perform these inspections, it is still unclear what the consequences of failed reviews are to any party, and the benefit remains unclear. Accordingly we ask that the quota be removed or at least redefined and supported by language.

In addition to the requirements to review 1% of all measures tested by each Rater, and 1% of all Associated addresses, Providers are also asked to review an additional 1% of all measures entered into the Registry, selected randomly. We ask that this requirement be reduced to .25%, which is still a substantial number. Not only is the 1% number excessive, and costly to Providers to meet, but subjecting Raters at random to additional QA requirements after they've been subject to their 1% per measure quota, even if they passed, can foster confusion, resentment, and can lead Raters to accuse their Providers of singling them out unfairly or not using a truly random selection process. There is only one benefit to maintaining this quota, at a reduced level – it ensures that Raters know that any job can be subject to QA Review, even after they've met their quota. We also ask CEC to clarify if this requirement pertains to systems, addresses, or measures. Additionally, there is no way to ensure timeliness since the install because each Provider would have to be doing this additional 1% at the same pace as regular QA, so it doubles the load instantly and continuously.

Per Title 20 Raters can be subject to additional QA Review on measures where discrepancies or failures have already been found; initially they are subject to an additional 2 reviews “over the past 6 months”, which we refer to as ‘+2’. But that directly opposes industry outcry that ratings be timely following the installation. If they continue to fail they are subject to an additional 1% QA requirement for that measure, referred to as ‘2%’. CalCERTS requests that the ‘2%’ be changed to an additional ‘+2’. The ‘2%’ requirement can be punishing both to Raters and Providers, especially in cases of high volume Raters – for example, consider Raters who trigger QA requirements once a month (and we have Raters that do). The Provider must perform 12 QA inspections per the 1% rule. If we suppose that the Rater is put on +2 in July, and 2% in August due to repeat failures, then 7 more QA Reviews are required in the remaining 5 months of the year, and so a Review is required almost twice a month. This is cumbersome and expensive not just for the Provider but also for the Rater whose work is constantly being subject to review. In light of the comments submitted previously to make QA ‘more educational’ and to standardize the investigative and disciplinary processes, we suggest that the ‘2%’ requirement is overkill, and should therefore be removed, or at least be subject to a cap.

CalCERTS would also like to suggest that Providers be acknowledged as having met the quota on a particular Rater, even if that Rater has not been subject to QA Review, if the Provider can prove that they’ve made every effort to perform a Review but have been unsuccessful. This can be an issue with low volume Alterations Raters – they may perform 20 or fewer Ratings a year, which results in a small pool of homeowners for Providers to contact for permission to enter the home and perform a Review. In many cases homeowners refuse entry to the Provider, even after they are made aware of the benefits, and with only a small pool of homeowners available it is possible to literally contact every homeowner and be refused entry by all. CalCERTS records the results of all attempts to schedule QA with homeowners in the Registry, including attempts that meet with no answer and attempts that end in the homeowner refusing entry and asking not to be called again. CalCERTS requests that CEC formally accept such evidence from Providers as demonstrating that the Rater is unable to be QA Reviewed but that the Provider has met their quota.

## **Proposed Changes to QA Methods**

CalCERTS also would like to suggest some changes to the methods and techniques used to perform QA Review, primarily by incorporating new technologies to simplify the process and make desktop QA Reviews more feasible.

First, we ask that Providers be allowed to use photographic evidence as a supplement to field Review. If a Rater is able to upload time-stamped geo-tagged digital photos to a Registry, the Provider would in turn be able to use those photos during the QA Review process. For example, a picture of the nameplate for an air conditioner could be used for a Review of the High SEER and High EER measures without requiring a field visit. Photographic evidence of this sort could also be used for QA Review of portions of the QII (particularly during the framing stage) Ducts in Conditioned Space, and Domestic Hot Water measures.

Diagnostic tools that report their data to the cloud, with timestamps and geo-location data, are already available in the marketplace, with more such tools to come. Arguably some of these tools

already provide enough information for a QA Rater to Review the work done simply by reviewing the data and pictures for the measure in question, without requiring a field visit. We ask that CEC approve the use of such tools as a means of achieving the QA quota on appropriate measures – currently tools exist for Duct Leakage, Building Envelope Sealing, and Refrigerant Charge Verification. Furthermore we suggest that Title 20 or any supporting QA documents from Commission include a review and approval process for new technologies that may be used for QA in the future.

Finally, there are some HERS Measures that are extremely difficult to QA. QII is, of course, one of the hardest measures to Review, primarily because there is very little time to inspect the installed insulation before drywall. If there were an alternative way for QA Raters to verify a home had met the QII criteria, perhaps by IR photography, this problem should be solved; failing that, we request an additional reduction in the quota for this measure, possibly all the way down to not having a quota for this measure at all, or at the very least a ‘partial credit’ for this measure as it is not difficult to review other portions of the QII measure (for example, it’s not hard for QA Raters to verify the depth of blown-in insulation). Another measure that may prove extremely difficult to QA, for similar reasons, is the E+A+A measure documented on the CF3R-EXC-20. Although the volume for this measure is low, there is no clear QA protocol for this measure, and there is a possibility that any QA Review of this measure may require four hours or more. The most daunting problem, though, is that by the time the EXC-20 is submitted retrofits may already have been completed, and it would therefore be impossible for the QA Rater to review the previously existing conditions. As with QII we ask that the E+A+A measure be subject to a reduced or zero quota until these problems are resolved.

Respectfully Yours,



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Michael E. Bachand  
President



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Michael C. Bachand  
Vice President