

Description

This program marked the first time Georgia Power endorsed a specific product, explained Bob Muller, East Coast Sales Manager for Marathon/Rheem Water Heaters. However, the utility selected this product because, “it was the water heater that made the most financial sense to our customers because of its lifetime tank warranty,” Mills added. “Marathons can last for up to 50 years, compared with the average lifetime expectancy for a standard water heater of between 9 to 12 years.” This long lifetime was a key element in promoting the program, both internally and externally, Mills explained. Using their economic models, the Marathon water heater was more cost-effective for their customers who converted from their existing gas systems to Marathon electric water heaters. “Our customers can save money with a Marathon,” Mills said.

Georgia Power offers customers a \$525 rebate to switch from an existing natural gas water heater to a Marathon water heater. However, the actual costs for this conversion may be higher depending on the extent of the electrical wiring required.

The program which initially targeted both single family existing homes as well as new homes has also experienced success in the multi-family housing market.

“We had one multi-family project that installed several hundred Marathon water heaters. The town homes are now all-electric and there is a lot of good buzz about it.”

Energy and Non-Energy Benefits

Marathon also has “green” benefits because it conserves landfill space. Unlike standard steel-tank water heaters (including tankless models) which could end up in a landfill after only 10 years, electric Marathons do not contribute to the increased landfill space needs due to their long life expectancy and lifetime tank warranty.

Furthermore, because the Marathon water heater is designed to last forever, a Marathon also prevents pollution in other ways. Nearly 10 million water heaters are produced, transported and installed annually in North America to replace failed units. Installing lifetime tank warranty heaters could potentially cut that number in half.

Georgia Power factored in the “green” benefits of Marathon water heaters in its modeling for the program. Using an average 9-year gas water heater life and a 36-year life for Marathon, the landfill space avoided per Marathon Water Heater is 28.8 cubic feet. This is equivalent to 50 full dump truck loads of heaters saved from the landfill for every 1,000 Marathon water heaters that are installed.

The durability of the Marathon water heaters was another selling point to the multi-family property managers, Mills added. “The multi-family manager loves Marathons because there are no worries about maintenance and service and they want to avoid service calls and damage that occurs from leaking heaters.”

Implementation Tactics

Georgia Power had a pilot program with employees in 2006. In 2007, the program was rolled out externally to its residential customers. The ultimate goal was to provide a broader distribution of water heaters and to expand the program to all customer segments. In 2008, that goal was met by expanding once again – this time to their commercial customers.

“Georgia Power also provided the forms electronically on their Web site, so local plumbers and contractors could download all the forms they needed and provide customers with a Marathon wherever they were.” Muller added.

The Web site also provided customers with helpful information about Georgia Power’s Marathon program; including a statewide map of recommended installers, an interactive Marathon water heater graphic illustrating all the benefits of the product, numerous forms and fact sheets, and satisfied customer testimonials. Visit georgiapower.com/marathon.

