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Abstract Title: Whetting Customer Appetite for Energy Savings in the California's Fourth Year of Drought

Abstract Text:

Research in California suggests that water concerns (or non-energy issues) could be an effective way to get consumer attention on energy efficiency. Now in its fourth year, with state mandated water savings goals, California's drought is nearly impossible for consumers to ignore. By tapping customer awareness of the state's water issues and tying water and energy savings together, California utilities have the opportunity to gain customer interest through messaging that includes water as it relates to energy efficiency. This paper will review two studies done for San Diego Gas & Electric in which water issues were a significant focus among study participants. The first study focused on the wants and needs of the agriculture sector and found that customers were significantly more interested in water-related agriculture measures (sprinkler to drip irrigation, low pressure sprinkler nozzles, and water pump efficiency testing) than other agriculture related measures. The second study (an evaluation of Field Services efforts for the Plug Load and Appliance Program) found that the Field Services contractor was having a better time engaging retail staff by showing them drought maps and then explaining how water and energy are connected. Both findings suggest that messaging related water and drought can help pull in customers and create more interest in energy efficiency as it relates to the state's ongoing water shortage. This session will suggest that we meet customers with messaging related to their concerns outside of the energy sector and utilize the water crisis to motivate consumers.