

Hot Water Heaters - Temperature Regulation

Unnecessarily hot tap or bath water creates an extreme risk of severe burns. Reducing the temperature settings on thermostats to **120°F / 49°C** saves energy, reduces homeowners' utility costs, and promotes home safety without any loss of comfort or health. Below you'll find the state's regulation regarding the temperature on hot water heaters in rental properties. If you have any questions, please contact your Leasing Specialist.

RCW 19.27A.060

- (1) "Hot water heater" means the primary source of hot water for a residence.
- (2) The thermostat of a new water heater offered for sale or lease in Washington state for use in a residential unit, shall be preset by the manufacturer no higher than one hundred twenty degrees Fahrenheit (or forty-nine degrees Celsius) or the minimum setting on any water heater which cannot be set as low as that temperature. Water heating systems may utilize higher reservoir temperature if mixing valves are set or systems are designed to restrict the temperature of water to one hundred twenty degrees Fahrenheit.
- (3) **Upon occupancy of a new tenant in a residential unit leased or rented in this state, if hot water is supplied from an accessible, individual water heater, the water heater shall be set by the owner or agent at a temperature not higher than one hundred twenty degrees Fahrenheit (forty-nine degrees Celsius) or the minimum setting on any water heater which cannot be set as low as that temperature.** Water heating systems may utilize higher reservoir temperature if mixing valves are set or systems are designed to restrict the temperature of water to one hundred twenty degrees Fahrenheit.
- (4) Nothing in this section shall prohibit an owner of an owner-occupied residential unit or resident of a leased or rented residential unit from readjusting the temperature setting after occupancy. Any readjustment of the temperature setting by the resident relieves the owner or agent of an individual residential unit and the manufacturer of water heaters from liability for damages attributed to the readjustment by the resident.
- (5) The utility providing energy for any water heater under this section shall at least annually, include in its billing a statement:
 - a. Recommending that water heaters be set no higher than one hundred twenty degrees Fahrenheit or the minimum setting on a water heater which cannot be set as low as that temperature to prevent severe burns and reduce excessive energy consumption; and
 - b. That the thermostat of an individual water heater furnished in a residential unit leased or rented in this state to new tenants shall be set no higher than one hundred twenty degrees Fahrenheit or the minimum setting on a water heater which cannot be set as low as that temperature pursuant to chapter [19.27](#) RCW.
- (6) The manufacturer of a water heater under this section which is offered for sale or installed after July 24, 1983, shall have a tag attached to the thermostat access plate or immediately adjacent to exposed thermostats. The tag shall state that the thermostat settings above the preset temperature may cause severe burns and consume excessive energy.
- (7) Nothing in this section requires or permits any inspections other than those otherwise required or permitted by law.
- (8) This section does not apply to multiple-unit residences supplied by central water heater systems.