

Aggregate Billing Records as a Better Way to Benchmark Multifamily Properties

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Introduction

Many cities are requiring that commercial properties be benchmarked using EPA's Portfolio Manager as a way to compare the relative efficiencies of properties. It is hypothesized that successful benchmarking will allow potential tenants to use energy costs as a decision factor in deciding among possible properties to rent. Questions remain about whether this type of benchmarking with respect to whether approach can be perfected inexpensively and accurately enough to be practical. There is also concern that this process relies on physical characteristics underplaying the role that operation and maintenance play in determining actual energy bills. The current benchmarking also produces only a score for the entire property; thus it does not separate energy costs for tenants from those that are the responsibility of the building owner.

Recent work in a statewide study has demonstrated that utility billing records can be manipulated using readily available software to identify multifamily accounts and aggregate them at the property level. Using software that converts each gas and electric utilities' individual residential account address into a standardized US Post Office address, we are able to identify accounts that are multifamily and aggregate these accounts to a specific multifamily property. By dividing the aggregate premise amount by the number of accounts, we are able to derive an average utility bill amount for both gas and electricity for each multifamily property. One benefit of this averaging technique is that it does not require that every unit in every building be accurately identified. This allows us to ignore any account that cannot be positively identified as belonging to a specific property; as those accounts are not included in either the numerator or the denominator of the calculated average bill.

This poster demonstrates the feasibility of using these composite billing records as a means of benchmarking tenant costs. It shows the simple steps that governments or utilities need to do to create an average tenant bill for each building in their area. The poster compares the efficacy of our approach to the EPA's Portfolio method and demonstrates the advantages of using the average bill as the benchmarking approach.