

Potential €25 million in annual energy savings under new EU labelling legislation

Consumers advised to look for energy efficiency labelling before purchasing

The implementation of EU legislation regarding the labelling of electric ovens could ultimately result in annual energy savings of over €25 million each year in Ireland. That is according to Tom Halpin of Sustainable Energy Ireland who was speaking in Dublin during Energy Awareness Week 2003.

Effective in Ireland since June 30th, 2003, the legislation requires energy rating labels to be displayed on electric ovens. The new statutory instrument complements existing labelling legislation which applies to all fridges, freezers, washers, dryers and dishwashers. Energy labelling legislation aims to empower consumers to be more discerning and ultimately more responsible when selecting their appliances.

Under the legislation, labels must be clearly displayed on all electric ovens on display in shops. The label indicates the energy performance of each appliance rated from A-G, where A is the most efficient and therefore the preferential rating. It is hoped that the new legislation will encourage consumers to consider more energy efficient ovens when making their purchasing decision. At present, an energy rating of D is the European norm for ovens, although past experience has shown that manufacturers tend to work towards improving the energy performance of their product range once energy labelling has been introduced. Energy labels also carry other useful information for consumers – for example the new oven label also tells consumers what the usable volume of the oven is.

Under the Kyoto Protocol, Ireland has agreed to limit the emissions of greenhouse gases to 13% above its 1990 level by the period 2008 to 2012. Energy-related CO₂ emissions account for most of the growth in Ireland's emissions.

Mr Halpin said, "Ireland has a responsibility to meet demanding targets in relation to our emissions of CO₂ gas, 30% of which result from energy use in the home. Empowering the consumer to make informed, discerning and responsible decisions for themselves is a key aspect of the labelling legislation".

"In line with the growth in the domestic property market, consumers in Ireland are purchasing more energy-consuming domestic appliances than ever before. As a result, in real terms, domestic energy use is rapidly increasing. This represents a serious threat to our environment and a huge challenge for all of us. It is therefore vitally important that consumers be mindful of the energy efficiency of appliances and purchase the most efficient model they can within their budget."

Mr. Halpin added that it is encouraging to see the continued expansion of energy labelling schemes in Ireland as a means of informing consumers and stimulating suppliers to provide higher efficiency goods.

"Since 2001, all new cars are required to carry an energy label at point of sale. An energy rating system for houses is being developed at the moment which will provide potential house buyers with a useful point of comparison for different types of houses. The increasing penetration of the energy labelling system allows consumers to discern the true energy cost of more products before they purchase. Using a standard system for assessing appliances and presenting the energy ratings increases the reliability of the information and thereby reduces the consumers purchase risk", Mr Halpin concluded.

Choosing energy efficient appliances is just one of many ways that consumers can reduce energy usage. Being energy efficient saves money as well as benefiting the environment. The cost saving element continues to increase in relevance as energy and electricity prices escalate. In time, the proposed carbon tax will also result in price rises designed to stimulate reduced energy use.

Energy Awareness Week, which is organised by Sustainable Energy Ireland, is the single most important platform for promoting energy efficiency in Ireland. The week aims to raise awareness of how important it will be for individuals to change their purchase and usage patterns in relation to energy in order to benefit the global environment.

Sustainable Energy Ireland was established on May 1st, 2002, as a statutory authority charged with promoting and assisting the development of sustainable energy. SEI is funded by the Irish Government under the National Development Plan 2000-2006 with programmes part financed by the European Union.

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For further information please contact:

Diarmuid O'Neill

Edelman

01-6789333 / 087-6699933

Editors Notes:

About Energy Labelling

Energy labelling of appliances was first introduced in Ireland in 1995 under EU legislation. Energy labels help consumers to make a more informed choice when buying an appliance by allowing them to easily compare the energy consumption of different models. Energy consumption is rated from A-G with A being the most efficient. Energy efficient appliances will save consumers money on energy bills and are less harmful to the environment. The legislation currently covers washers, driers, combination washer driers, fridges, freezers, fridge freezers, dishwashers, ovens and air conditioners.