



NEWS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 19, 2008

Contact: Gordon Anderson 512.475.4743
Jorge Reyes 512.475.4577

Texans Encouraged to Lower Housing Costs Through Energy Star Appliance Sales Tax Holiday

State offers opportunity to save on products, utility bills

(AUSTIN) — Texans have an unusual opportunity to cash in not once, but twice on energy efficient products this Memorial Day weekend. Thanks to an Energy Star sales tax holiday May 24-26, Texans will not only pay less for items designed to use less energy, they will also enjoy the cost-saving benefits of lower utility bills. The Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs (TDHCA) encourages all Texans to take advantage of the compounded savings and the benefits of lower housing costs.

"Energy Star appliances translate into lower housing costs," said Michael Gerber, TDHCA Executive Director. "The Energy Star sales tax holiday will help Texans save money by lowering the costs of energy efficient appliances as well as lowering their monthly energy costs."

The Energy Star Sales Tax Holiday applies to the following appliances and household equipment: air conditioners priced less than \$6,000, ceiling fans, dehumidifiers, dishwashers, incandescent and fluorescent light bulbs, programmable thermostats, refrigerators priced less than \$2,000 and clothes washers, but not clothes dryers. Shoppers are expected to save about \$2.6 million in state and local sales taxes.

To qualify for the sales tax exemption, the Energy Star logo must appear on the appliance, the packaging or the Energy Guide label. The tax break also applies to catalog or Internet sales of eligible products during Memorial Day weekend and to items placed on layaway or removed from layaway during that weekend.

According to the Energy Information Administration, if Texas families would replace their old appliances with Energy Star rated appliances they could cut their energy bills, as well as greenhouse gas emissions, by about 30%. However, TDHCA reminds everyone there are a number of additional ways in which families can curb their energy costs while keeping their homes affordable and reducing demand on energy resources.

- more -

221 E. 11TH • AUSTIN, TEXAS 78701 • (800) 525-0657 • (512) 475-3800

Visit us on the world wide web at: www.tdhca.state.tx.us

A few hundred dollars spent properly insulating and weatherizing a home can reduce heating and cooling needs by up to 30 percent. By also caulking, sealing, and weather-stripping seams and cracks that create air leaks in a home, a family can save 10 percent or more on their energy bills.

Also about one-third of a typical home's heat loss occurs around and through the doors and windows. Energy-efficient doors and windows are always a good energy saving investment. An inexpensive alternative is to make sure existing doors seal tightly and have door sweeps at the bottom to prevent air leaks. Caulk any cracks around the windows, make sure they seal tightly and add sheets of clear plastic to the outside to create additional air barriers.

Certain landscape practices can modify the weather's impact on home environments. By strategically placing trees, shrubs, and other landscape structures to block the wind and provide shade, residents can reduce the energy needed to keep their homes comfortable during heating and cooling seasons.

"High energy costs significantly influence the affordability of housing for everyone," said Gerber. "Combining both the use of Energy Star appliances and implementing simple and inexpensive energy saving measures can mean significant savings for households of all incomes and a healthier environment for all of us."

Details on the Energy Star Sales Tax Holiday are available at www.window.state.tx.us. TDHCA's energy assistance programs provide help to more than 83,529 low-income Texans each year. The Department's weatherization program assisted more than 5,404 Texans last year. For more information on TDHCA's Energy Assistance Programs or more energy saving tips, log onto www.tdhca.state.tx.us or call 1-800-525-0657.

About The Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs

The Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs is Texas' lead agency responsible for affordable housing, community and energy assistance programs, and colonia activities. The Department annually administers more than \$400 million through for-profit, non-profit, and local government partnerships to deliver local housing and community-based opportunities and assistance to Texans in need.