

NEW HOME OWNERS ARE PAYING £4 MILLION TOO MUCH TO POWER THEIR HOMES

- NHER calls for minimum energy standards for the installation of kitchen appliances in new homes -

House builders' failure to install the most efficient appliances and boilers in brand new homes is costing home owners over £4million every year, according to research published today by the National Home Energy Rating (NHER) scheme and Pilkington Energy Efficiency Trust.

It is environmentally damaging too, with new homes churning out over 18,800 tonnes of extra carbon dioxide (CO₂) every year just because they are not fitted with the most efficient white goods.

Most appliances such as refrigerators, freezers, fridge-freezers, ovens, washing machines, tumble dryers, washer-dryers and dishwashers are sold with energy labels rating their efficiency on a scale of A to G. The difference in cost for house builders between providing A-rated and C-rated appliances is insignificant, and in some cases A-rated appliances are cheaper.

Although the research findings suggest that nearly 80% of all appliances typically installed in new homes have an energy rating of B or above, the difference between the ideal situation - where all new homes are fitted with A-rated appliances - and the situation NHER found in its research produces over 2,800 tonnes of CO₂ annually. This is equivalent to the sort of pollution caused by driving a petrol-powered car, such as a Ford Focus, for 55 million km - or from Edinburgh to London 40,000 times!

The situation is much worse when it comes to heating systems in new homes. NHER research suggests that half of all new homes are currently being built with the least efficient, D-rated boilers. On average, D-rated boilers emit 0.2 tonnes more CO₂ than A-rated boilers and cost £30 a year more to run in a typical new house. That adds up to 16,000 tonnes of CO₂ and about £2.4million in extra cost to home owners every year.

Austin Baggett, head of the NHER scheme, says: "The irony is, brand new homes are very well insulated and designed to be energy efficient, and they perform head and shoulders better than older properties.

"But while some house builders are capitalising on this advantage and installing the best A-rated appliances and boilers in their homes for sale, there is no consistency in the market and the failure of other builders is costing the public - and the planet - dear."

NHER is calling for future revisions to Building Regulations to impose new minimum energy standards for the installation of appliances in new homes, to complement the changes to the boiler regulations from April 2005.

It is also urging house builders to inform visitors to their sites and all potential homebuyers about the energy performance of the appliances and boilers that will be provided. NHER's researchers were shocked to find that none of the 48 new homes sites they visited had energy labels on display for regulated appliances and boilers, even where these were A-rated.

The National Home Energy Rating (NHER) scheme is the national membership scheme for energy efficiency professionals in the UK, and operates the UK's leading energy rating scheme for residential property. NHER provides training, software and quality assured energy ratings to more than 1,600 organisations, and is at the forefront of promoting energy efficiency in housing. <http://www.nher.co.uk/>