

Household appliances to be rated for efficiency in drive to cut energy use

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DURBAN: New household refrigerators are soon to be colour-coded with energy-efficiency labels as part of a major government energy-saving plan that aims to cut South Africa's oil, coal and electricity use by 12% within 10 years.

The first labels are to be attached voluntarily to some brands later this month.

Compulsory labelling for these appliances is to take effect in about 18 months.

The labelling is to be extended in stages to cover washing

machines, tumble dryers, stoves, deep freezers and other energy-sucking appliances.

Fridges will be labelled using an A to G grading system. Although the most energy-efficient A-grade fridges are expected to cost more, consumers are likely to start recovering their costs within two years through lower electricity bills.

The energy-saving drive – which also targets major industries – is to be carried out through radio advertisements, in special taxi-rank promotions and with municipal utility bills.

Minerals and Energy Affairs

Minister Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka announced the plan in Midrand last night. She said the country could shave R9 billion off the whopping R60bn earmarked for new power-generating facilities before 2015.

She also indicated her commitment towards more nuclear power stations.

“Nuclear remains very important ... as there are no greenhouse gases emitted. The government will therefore continue to focus its attention on nuclear research.”

Also, to save money on fuel bills, South Africans should

move towards diesel-powered vehicles.

“New technology diesel engines will become available when our new low-sulphur-grade diesel specifications come into effect in January 2006 and this will help the introduction of cheaper, more efficient diesel engines,” the minister said.

“The indications are that this would result in improved diesel fuel efficiencies of between 30% and 40%, which translates into a saving of about a quarter of a billion rand a year for every 2% increase in usage of diesel over that of petrol by motorists.”

Health and environmental watchdogs are likely to oppose a move to diesel unless the government can show that new diesel emissions do not add to cancer risks and other airborne health threats.

At a household level, Mlambo-Ngcuka said the appliance labelling system would allow consumers to make more informed decisions about saving on electricity bills.

Government sources also suggest that household electricity bills are likely to rise steeply in the coming years to pay for new power stations.

