

FY2003 Market Monitoring Test Results

“Sample Purchase Tests implemented by Consumer Affairs Centers” with the technical support of NITE

(National Institute of Technology and Evaluation)

NITE has established the system of “Support for Consumer Affairs Centers’ product testing” to ensure the quality and safety of products as well as contributing to enhance the test techniques of Consumer Affairs Centers.

Brief summaries of the tests implemented by various centers in FY2003 are shown below. Based on the results, the centers have organized the necessary information for consumers, covering purchasing and the safe use of consumer products.

For further information on the test results, please contact the respective centers.

Domestic Food Waste Processors

<Hokkaido Consumer Affairs Center>

The installation of domestic food waste processors has become commonplace in recent years as a result of consumers’ consideration for environment. Also, many local authorities have schemes to provide subsidies to those installing these processors. There are two types; processing by dehydration and bio-processing. Products utilizing the bio-processing method are conventionally installed outdoors due to their unpleasant odors; however, in-room bio-type products are recently available on the market as well as the dry-type products. The Hokkaido Consumer Affairs Center has implemented a test of the products which can be installed indoors to assess their safety (e.g. surface temperature, insulation performance) and various performance factors (e.g. treating capability, economic efficiency or electricity expense, extent of noise and odor, etc.). The center also implemented a product use test, undertaken by monitors, and a survey.

Results revealed no safety problems with the sample products. The test suggests that the user should be aware that these devices tend to produce stronger odors when too much waste is placed inside them.

Energy-saving Electric Pots

<Miyagi Consumer Affairs Center>

Electric pots are convenient and in widespread use. Since these products remain switched on for long periods, a variety of energy-saving products have appeared in recent years including ones with double vacuum structures, ones with enhanced insulation and ones minimizing energy consumption through timers. The Miyagi Consumer Affairs Center has conducted a test of these products to confirm their performance (e.g. energy-saving effect, time required for boiling) and safety (e.g. water leakage when rolling over, insulation properties, boil-dry protection). The center also implemented a product use test undertaken by monitors, and a survey.

None of the tested samples had safety problems. For energy-saving products, the test confirmed some effectiveness although the level varies according to the product.

Fully automatic washing machine with drying function

<Tochigi Consumer Affairs Center>

Washing machines with a variety of functions have become available in recent years, and machines with a “drying function” have become available as a response to consumers’ minor drying needs. There are two types of these products; “heater” types and “heater-less” types that use only airflow for drying. These products have limited load capacity and drying performance, and are referred to as neither conventional washing machines nor electric clothing driers, and are thus confusing to consumers.

The Tochigi Prefectural Consumer Affairs Center implemented tests to check their drying performance and end results, as well as confirming safety issues such as accidental opening of the lid during operation, noise level and electric power consumption. The center also implemented a product use test undertaken by monitors, and a survey.

Results revealed no safety problems with the sample products. However, the laundry tends to get wrinkled when using this type of washing machine.

Electric heater

<Shiga Consumer Affairs Center>

The recent popularization of halogen heaters shaped like rotary electric fans, has resulted in an increase in accident reports involving burnt *tatami* mats or ignition.

The Shiga Prefectural Consumer Affairs Center implemented a test of electric heaters focusing on halogen heater safety (e.g. localized temperature rises, automatic shutoff when falling) and performance (e.g. power consumption, radiant temperature in terms of heating ability). A consumer survey was also conducted.

Results revealed no safety problems with these products.

Safe use of Kerosene heaters / fan heaters with cartridge tank

<Kyoto Prefectural Consumer Life and Science Center>

Every year, accidental fires occur when the kerosene, leaked from a cartridge tank due to a failure to securely close the cap when refilling, catches fire. The Kyoto Prefectural Consumer Life and Science Center has implemented a survey with monitors composed of male, female and senior citizens to study their behavioral patterns when filling kerosene, the tightness of the screwed cap, actions when extinguishing the fire, and activation of the automatic shutoff device.

The survey revealed that some monitors failed to turn off the heater when filling kerosene, and some senior monitors closed the lid loosely in view of an upcoming refill.

Domestic Hairdryer

<Fukuoka Consumer Affairs Center>

Hair dryers have become one of the essential home electric appliances, however ignition accidents are occurring at the connecting part where the body of the hairdryer and the power cord meet. The Fukuoka Consumer Affairs Center implemented a test to confirm their safety, including the power cord’s resistance to folding, temperature, air flow rate, and energy consumption. The center also implemented a product use test undertaken by monitors, and a consumer survey.