

FY2004 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 FY2004 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 or go to their web sites.

Humidifiers

<Miyagi Consumer Affairs Center>

Humidifiers have become common household items in recent years for a variety of reasons including health care, etc. There are various types of humidifier on the market using a variety of humidifying methods including; hybrid system (combined heater and vaporizer), steam fan system (heater with fan), steam system (heater without fan), heater-less fan system (vaporizer), etc. Miyagi Consumer Affairs Center purchased various products and conducted tests to confirm quality performance (e.g. electric energy consumption, humidification level and noise level) and safety (e.g. temperature at steam vent, safety device in the event of failure and rollover stability). The center also implemented a product use test undertaken by monitors and a consumer utilization survey.

Test results revealed that humidifiers using a heater-less fan system required less electricity than those with steam systems, while hybrid system energy consumption ranged between the two.

Clothing using down/feathers for filling (Down Jacket)

<Toyama Prefectural Consumer Affairs Center>

Various types of down jackets, or jackets using down and/or feather fillings, are being marketed as excellent winter clothes due to their light weight and heat retaining characteristics. Labeling for the composition of fillings for clothing (e.g. cotton, down/feather) is on a voluntary basis and not required by the Household Goods Quality Labeling Law. However, composition is an important factor when evaluating the quality of these products. Furthermore, Toyama Consumer Affairs Center received information on a case in which a down jacket carried improper labeling for its composition. The Center, therefore, conducted a sample purchase test of down jackets to check composition of fabrics and fillings (down/feather), design of the inner bags, etc.

Test results revealed that all samples had proper labeling for outer fabrics, however, for fillings, 4 products provided improper labeling for composition. NITE reported the test results to the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) who has given warnings to the relevant labelers in view of the importance of the composition ratio of fillings.

Safe and smart use of Rice Cookers

<Kyoto Prefectural Consumer Life and Science Center>

Various types of induction heating (IH) rice cookers are being sold in addition to the conventional ones which use heaters. Furthermore, various differentiated products with additional functions including pressurization, ultrasound or steam, etc, have become available in recent years. Kyoto Prefectural Consumer Life and Science Center purchased various rice cookers to confirm the quality performance (e.g. electric energy consumption, tasting tests by consumer monitors) and safety (e.g. temperature at steam vent, etc.). In addition, a consumer survey was conducted covering utilization and grievances, etc.

Test results showed that the energy required to keep a cooker warm for 7-8 hours was equivalent to or greater than the energy required to cook the rice in the first place.

Vapor Steam Cleaners

<Fukuoka Consumer Affairs Center>

Vapor steam cleaners are being advertised on TV shopping or in mail-order catalogs as effective devices for cleaning tough greases on cars or in kitchens, and for removing stains from clothes. However some users are dissatisfied with the actual performance (being less than expected), and there is concern over the use of hot steam which may constitute a burn injury hazard. Fukuoka Consumer Affairs Center, therefore, purchased various steam cleaners and conducted a monitoring test to check their cleaning ability and usability as well as a test to confirm their quality performance (e.g. spray duration) and safety (e.g. temperatures at parts that come into contact with users). In addition, the Center has implemented a consumer survey covering utilization and hazardous experiences.

The test revealed that users should cool steam cleaners sufficiently before opening the boiler to refill water, to prevent possible burns.