

High Street Retailers Squander Air Con Energy in Heatwave

Submitted by: Kaizo (London)

Monday, 12 July 2010

12 July, 2010 – A third of high street chains are wasting huge amounts of energy by operating their air conditioning below the recommended Summer store temperature of 24°C, Make It Cheaper, the business price comparison service, has uncovered. Furthermore, of all the stores measured in the experiment, which took place on a sweltering July day, only one kept its doors closed to keep the cool air escaping.

Armed with thermal imaging cameras capturing temperatures at shop entrances, the Make It Cheaper team researched retailer habits on London's Oxford Street when the outside temperature in the South East recorded a sizzling 28.4 degrees Celsius. The research shows that retailers are effectively burning millions of pounds by blasting up their air conditioning to make for a pleasant shopping environment and yet leaving their doors wide open.

Key findings include:

- A third of stores operated below 24°C, against advice on the Carbon Trust's website, which recommends their air conditioning doesn't operate below this temperature.
- Whilst there was a difference of as much as eight degrees between outside and inside temperatures, just one store - Debenhams - kept its doors closed to prevent the cool air escaping and the warm air entering
- At 20.1 degrees Celsius and a huge 8.3 degrees cooler at the door than the outside temperature, Next was the worst offender
- Boots, River Island and Ann Harvey did not fare much better, at 21.1, 21.6 and 22.4 degrees respectively. Boots at least had automatic doors, though these were recorded as open almost all the time due to the high volume of traffic into and out of the store

Jonathan Elliott, managing director of Make It Cheaper, commented: "Shopkeepers in New York get fined \$400 by the City Council if they have their doors open with the air con on because it burns so much more energy to cool a shop than it does to keep it warm. This can only be a taste of things to come when the government's CRC Energy Efficiency Scheme kicks in over here and forces retailers to re-think how they use energy in their stores. There are simple things that staff can do now, however, such as to challenge head office policy, set the thermostat higher, turn off some of the lights and tweak the automatic doors to close more frequently. It is common sense, saves money as well as energy and is everybody's responsibility."

According to figures from The Carbon Trust, the retail sector is responsible for over five million tonnes of CO2 emissions per year. It is estimated that energy savings of up to 20% – equivalent to more than £300m – are possible across the sector.

Cutting down on unnecessary waste and getting the right energy contracts go hand-in-hand for any business. Switching business energy suppliers can reduce bills by as much as 50%. Taking energy efficiency measures can bring down annual bills by a further 10%-30%.

High Street Coldest Shops League Table:

Store Store temperature (degrees Celsius)

Next 20.1

Boots* 21.1

River Island 21.6

Ann Harvey 22.4

Uniqlo 23.3

Thorntons 23.9

Russell & Bromley 25

Starbucks 25.6

BHS 25.6

Barratts 25.9

TopShop 25.9

John Lewis 26

Nike 26.6

Debenhams** 27.3

House of Fraser 28

GAP 28.1

H&M 29.1

HMV 29.1

*Automatic door open due to footfall

**Doors kept closed

The experiment looked at a number of factors to identify the efficiency of the air conditioning, measuring the outside temperature, the temperature at the shop entrance and whether the doors were open, closed or automatic.

- Ends -

About Make It Cheaper

Established in 2007 and based at a 50-seat call centre in Central London, Make It Cheaper receives more utility price enquiries (2,000 a week) and arranges more new contracts (1,000 a week) than any other business-only price comparison service. These enquiries include business customers from most of the major domestic price comparison sites (eg GoCompare, Moneysupermarket & uSwitch) as well as trade associations and business membership organisations (eg The Law Society). Make It Cheaper is also featured on MoneySavingExpert and Consumer Focus. Acting on behalf of its customers with total impartiality and without charge, Make It Cheaper offers cost savings across a range of products including comparison for business electricity prices, gas, business insurance and telecoms. The prices it offers are often better than going direct to suppliers because of the volume of deals it negotiates.

Contact:

Steph MacLeod / Sarah Mayer
Kaizo
Makeitcheaper@kaizo.net
+44 (0)20 3043 4151