



PRESS RELEASE

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Don't fix climate change with air conditioning

In reaction to the hottest July in the UK since records began, many turned to air conditioning, resulting in blackouts in central London. However, according to a new study published this week by the Association for the Conservation of Energy, we can do without air conditioning well into 2050. Instead we need to recognise temperatures will rise and adapt our buildings and working attitudes.

If temperatures continue to rise and air conditioning use grows unchecked, research by the Association for the Conservation of Energy (ACE) predicts that by 2020 homes in the south of England could be emitting an additional 5 million tonnes CO₂ every year. This is equivalent to the yearly emissions of 2.8 million new homes, and close to wiping out the savings made by the combined 2002 and 2006 domestic sector Building Regulations.

But *Cold Comfort for Kyoto*, the ACE report funded by the Pilkington Energy Efficiency Trust, predicts that through simple changes in our attitudes and by being mindful of the energy used for cooling, we can reduce it by a third. Furthermore, coupled with building improvements, cooling to comfortable indoor temperatures can be achieved almost entirely without increases in the use of energy.

The report recommends that:

- Building Regulations must include mandatory cooling standards
- Minimum energy performance standards are introduced for air conditioning units, similar to boilers

- Better information is provided about alternatives to air conditioning e.g. solar shading, fans
- Air conditioners are sold with clear instructions for efficient use
- People and businesses need to explore adaptive responses and innovative policies such as changing work attire

Anson Wu, co-author of the report, said:

“The danger is that everyone rushes out and buys the cheapest, least efficient air conditioner and leaves it on all summer. Instead, most of us can simply adapt our tolerance to warmer temperatures through the way we dress, our daily routines, and how we shade and ventilate our homes, without compounding the problem through yet further energy consumption”

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Ends

Notes to editors:

- UKCIP predict that southern England, already the warmest region, will face the highest temperature increases; between 1-1.5°C in 2020, to 2-3°C in 2050, and 3.5-5 °C in 2080 <http://www.ukcip.org.uk/>
- The residential energy consumption model is based on comfort scenarios developed by Shove and Chappells <http://www.lancs.ac.uk/fss/sociology/research/projects/futcom/index.htm>
- Using South England as the focus for the research, if the population uses air conditioning in their homes, 11 TWh_e might be consumed by 2020 for air-conditioning alone
- Commercial sector air conditioning is predicted to grow approximately 7% pa
- The Government's Climate Change the UK Programme 2006, projects 1.5MtC will be saved by the 2002 and 2006 Building Regulations in 2010.

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