



Deutsche Umwelthilfe

JOINT PRESS RELEASE

Incorrect recycling of refrigerators endangers European climate protection goals: Environmental organisations DUH and ECOS call for high treatment standards throughout Europe

Poor treatment standards for old refrigerators in Germany, Poland and the UK – Deutsche Umwelthilfe (DUH) and ECOS urge EU Member States to lay down European quality standards EN 50625-2-3 and TS 50625-3-4 in national waste legislation – The improper disposal of more than 19 million cooling appliances in Europe every year could result in the annual release of up to 26 million tonnes of CO₂ equivalents and cause the European climate protection goals to fail.

Berlin, 4.11.2016: Outdated treatment standards and incorrect practices in recycling old cooling appliances endanger European climate protection goals. This is the conclusion of the briefing paper (<http://l.duh.de/g90dk>) released today by Environmental Action Germany (Deutsche Umwelthilfe – DUH) and the European Environmental Citizens' Organisation for Standardisation (ECOS), a pan-European environmental NGO specialised in standardisation, in time for the climate protection summit beginning in Marrakesh on 7 November.

In Europe, around 19 million cooling appliances are discarded every year. About half of these appliances still contain coolants and propellants like chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs). If CFCs are released into the environment, they significantly contribute towards destroying the ozone layer and accelerating global warming. According to calculations by DUH and ECOS, the cooling appliances disposed of every year in Europe have a greenhouse potential of 26.6 million tonnes of CO₂. This is why ECOS and DUH call on EU Member States to lay down the quality standards EN 50574 and TS 50574-2 or the upcoming quality standards EN 50625-2-3 and TS 50625-3-4 in their national waste legislation. Compliance with these standards would ensure a safe and environmentally sound treatment of cooling appliances. Specifically in Germany, the UK and Poland, where the treatment of cooling appliances is particularly deficient.

“To achieve the climate protection goals agreed in Paris last year, greenhouse gas emissions must be lowered to practically zero. Improper treatment of cooling appliances in some EU states, including Germany, is causing the release of millions of tonnes of CO₂ equivalents into the atmosphere. Outdated disposal regulations and the lack of implementation of environmental regulations undermines Europe’s climate protection efforts,” criticises DUH General Manager Jürgen Resch.

Resch points towards exemplary EU Member States like France, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Ireland, Austria, and Switzerland. These countries set benchmarks in the recycling of cooling appliances, because they have laid down the stringent European quality standards EN 50574 and TS 50574-2 in legislation or have made them binding specifications via their national take-back

systems. All other countries should follow and make compliance with these quality standards mandatory, says Resch.

The CFCs contained in the coolant and the insulation of a fridge have a greenhouse potential of 2.8 tonnes of CO₂. This equals the CO₂ emissions of a medium-sized vehicle over a single year with a travel distance of 15,000 kilometres. By referencing high treatment standards for the recycling of cooling appliances in legislation, large amounts of CO₂ could be saved in a simple way and without expensive funding programmes.

“The market has already shown commitment to preventing GHG emissions from old refrigerators by developing robust European standards setting treatment requirements, especially EN 50625-2-3 and TS 50625-3-4. Although standards are often developed by industry alone, these treatment standards were successfully drafted in close cooperation with environmental NGOs ECOS and DUH. It is now up to the legislators to get up to speed by making these environmentally ambitious standards the baseline for the safe and environmental sound handling of WEEE, and help reach the EU air quality and waste objectives”, added Marjolaine Blondeau, Policy Officer at ECOS.

“In Europe, treatment operators of cooling appliances must finally be forced to provide evidence of how many appliances enter their systems, as well as how much coolant and propellant is actually removed. This, in combination with minimum recovery targets enables the authorities to assess the efficiency of a treatment facility over the entire year. Europe will continue to have difficulties achieving its climate protection goals as long as material flow balances and minimum recovery targets are not legally binding,” added Philipp Sommer, expert for Circular Economy at DUH.

More information:

Briefing Paper in German and English: <http://l.duh.de/g90dk>

DUH project page: <http://l.duh.de/19hlv>

ECOS project page: <http://ecostandard.org/?cat=127>

Background:

The European Norm EN 50574 (Collection, logistics & treatment requirements for end-of-life household appliances containing volatile fluorocarbons or volatile hydrocarbons) and the associated Technical Specification TS 50574-2 were developed by the European Committee for Electrotechnical Standardization (CENELEC), in order to overcome obstacles caused by diverging national standards in this field. The EN 50625-2-3 standard currently being developed by CENELEC and the associated Technical Specification TS 50625-3-4 are based on European Commission Mandate M/518 supporting Directive 2012/19/EU on Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE). Both EN 50625-2-3 and TS 50625-3-4 include to a considerable extent provisions from EN 50574 and TS 50574-2 standards. According to environmental organisations DUH and ECOS, these European disposal standards describe the technical state-of-the-art for treating cooling appliances in an environmentally friendly manner.

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