

BUSINESS

Govt gets tough on Kyoto pact

The Yomiuri Shimbun

So as to be able to meet its commitments under the Kyoto Protocol to curtail emissions of greenhouse gases, the government decided Tuesday to revise energy-saving standards for home appliances and fuel efficiency standards for heavy vehicles in fiscal 2006.

After the revision, liquid crystal- and plasma-display TVs as well as trucks and buses will be subject to regulations governing energy saving.

Under the Energy Conservation Law, standards have been based on the "front-runner approach," under which manufacturers of domestic appliances are urged to produce products with an energy-efficiency rating on par with the best products currently on the market. Currently, 18 home appliances, including air conditioners and refrigerators as well as passenger vehicles are subject to the regulation.

After the revision, DVD recorders, Internet routers, electric rice cookers and microwave ovens will be added to the list, as will LCD- and plasma-display TV sets.

In addition, buses and heavy trucks will be added to the vehicle categories, which will be the first time in the world an energy-efficiency standard has been applied to buses and trucks.

Under the Kyoto Protocol, Japan is to reduce its average emission of greenhouse gases between 2008 and 2012 by 6 percent from the 1990 level.

However, in fiscal 2003, the emission increased 8.3 percent from the 1990 level. Given this trend, boosting energy efficiency in transportation and home appliances is seen as vital to reducing emissions.

The specifics will be discussed by advisory panels of the Economy, Trade and Industry Ministry and the Construction and Transport Ministry.

The government aims to add the three

items—except Internet routers—by April by revising the enforcement regulations of the law.

Even though heavy trucks and buses that weigh more than 2.5 tons emit a huge volume of greenhouse gases, there has been no standard in place to measure fuel efficiency.

Therefore, the vehicles were not subject to an energy-saving standard.

As for trucks weighing more than 3.5 tons, the government will set up 11 fuel-consumption targets based on vehicles weight, ranging from 4.04 to 10.83 kilometers per liter.

If vehicles do not meet their targets, the government will make public the names of the manufacturer and the vehicle models and fine the makers.

By applying the standard to heavy vehicles, the government hopes to increase fuel efficiency in fiscal 2015 by 12 percent from the fiscal 2002 level.