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Energy Forward Helps Shoppers See the Big Picture in Televisions

NEEA and Northwest utilities shift consumers toward maximum energy efficiency, enlist social media to drive awareness

Portland, Ore. -- Energy Forward, an initiative of the Northwest Energy Efficiency Alliance (NEEA), wants to be liked this fall -- on Facebook. It even wants to be followed -- on Twitter. Working collaboratively with the region's utilities and energy efficiency organizations, NEEA is reaching out with social media to capture consumers' attention and help them make smarter decisions about how they use energy.

Following or "liking" Energy Forward could help consumers find their next, best television. A lucky few will win a new TV as part of Energy Forward's Big Picture Photo Contest, just in time for the holidays.

NEEA, in collaboration with Northwest utilities, energy efficiency organizations and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), created Energy Forward to help consumers identify the most energy-efficient, technologically advanced televisions on the market. A TV with the distinctive orange Energy Forward sticker means it is engineered to be the very best of ENERGY STAR -- the well-known U.S. government-backed standard for energy efficiency.

"We designed Energy Forward to make it easy for consumers to find TVs that deliver the most technologically advanced performance and energy efficiency," said Stephanie Fleming, residential sector manager for NEEA, a non-profit organization funded by the Bonneville Power Administration, Energy Trust of Oregon and more than 100 Northwest utilities to maximize energy efficiency in the Northwest. "Now we're expanding on that effort, using social media to build a consumer community who want to increase their energy efficiency literacy and be "Energy Forward" when it comes to televisions."

Reaching out to consumers through social media and in retail stores is only one facet of NEEA's strategy to shift the television market toward maximum energy efficiency. NEEA also collaborates with its partners to develop more stringent product specifications and works with retailers to stock and promote these most efficient TVs. The goal is to accelerate the market adoption of super-efficient TVs in the Northwest and to raise the bar for energy efficiency in TVs on a national scale.

Before NEEA launched Energy Forward at the end of 2009, there was no way to easily distinguish super-efficient TVs from TVs that met minimum energy-efficiency requirements. Less than two years later, retailers representing 80 percent of TVs sold in the Northwest are partnering with NEEA to promote Energy Forward TVs in their stores and to their consumers.

NEEA's work, combined with other partner efforts, has helped yield results in the market.

At the start of 2011, energy-efficient TVs that were promoted with the Energy Forward sticker represented 12 percent of televisions sold in the Northwest by participating retailers. NEEA anticipates that by the end of 2011, 35 to 40 percent of TVs sold in the region will be Energy Forward. Moreover, from 2009 through 2010, NEEA's regional television initiative saved the region approximately 13.7 average megawatts in energy savings, the equivalent to powering 10,453 homes each year.

The Northwest's social media efforts are designed to raise energy efficiency awareness and fuel the growing consumer demand for Energy Forward TVs before consumers ever reach a store.

"Idaho Power is committed to sharing ways energy efficiency can save our customers money while improving the quality of their home products," said Celeste Becia, Energy Efficiency Program Leader for Idaho Power. "Promoting Energy Forward through our social media channels has been a great way to engage in two-way communication with our customers while helping raise awareness about these technologically advanced energy-efficient televisions."

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Similarly, the Eugene Water & Electric Board (EWEB) has long embraced social media to engage with its more than 86,000 customers via frequent Facebook postings, regular Tweets @EWEButility and through its YouTube channel.

“We use every available channel to make our customers smarter about how they use energy, whether we’re alerting them to energy efficiency discounts and rebates or helping them prepare for colder temperatures this fall,” said Mark Tuffo, Energy Management Specialist at EWEB.

More than knowledge awaits. On Facebook starting today, Energy Forward launches the Big Picture Photo Contest. Residents of Idaho, Montana, Oregon and Washington are encouraged to visit <http://www.facebook.com/energyefficientelectronics> to enter and vote for favorite captions; five winners will receive new Energy Forward Samsung LED TVs.

With all of these efforts, NEEA and Northwest utilities hope consumers will see the real “big picture”: the power of energy efficiency. According to the Northwest Power and Conservation Council, 85 percent of the region’s new demand for electricity over the next 20 years can be met by using energy more efficiently. The council estimates some of the biggest energy savings could come from more Northwest residents choosing super-efficient televisions.

“A region-wide shift to the most efficient TVs has the potential to save enough energy to power more than 290,000 homes each year,” Fleming said. “Lowering TV energy use also reduces the need to build more expensive gas- and coal-fired power plants and helps avoid greenhouse gas emissions.”

Energy Forward TVs can be purchased at major retailers including Best Buy, Costco, Kmart, Sam’s Club, Sears and Walmart, and a range of regional and independent retailers throughout the Northwest. More information on Energy Forward, including complete lists of retailers and super energy-efficient televisions, is available at www.energyefficientelectronics.org.

About the Northwest Energy Efficiency Alliance

The Northwest Energy Efficiency Alliance (NEEA) is a non-profit organization working to maximize energy efficiency to meet our future energy needs. NEEA is supported by and works in partnership with the Bonneville Power Administration, Energy Trust of Oregon and more than 100 Northwest utilities for the benefit of more than 12 million energy consumers. NEEA uses the market power of the region to accelerate the innovation and adoption of energy-efficient products, services and practices. Since 1997, NEEA and its partners have saved enough energy to power more than 450,000 homes each year. Energy efficiency can satisfy more than half of our new demand for energy, saving money, and keeping the Northwest a healthy and vibrant place to live. For more information, visit neea.org.

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