



## Sir Richard Branson calls for higher energy efficiency of air-conditioners

The Air-Conditioning, Heating, and Refrigeration Institute (AHRI), whose members represent more than 70% of the global air conditioning industry, was responding to claims by Virgin boss Sir Richard Branson that the ac industry was only interested in selling high volume cheap air conditioners with little regard to efficiency.

"It is apparent that Sir Branson is referring to portable air conditioners of the type that can be found at big box stores and installed by homeowners in windows as needed, and yet he appears to lump the entire global central air conditioning industry together with that product category, accusing it of perpetuating "pathetic" energy efficiency levels," commented Francis J Dietz, the AHRI's vice president, public affairs.

Dietz pointed out that the AHRI does not represent manufacturers of window air conditioners, but maintains that the average efficiency levels of residential and commercial central air conditioning units manufactured by its member companies have increased nearly 50% over the past 12 years.

Writing on the Virgin website, Sir Richard Branson claimed that air conditioners had "barely scratched the surface" of their technology potential, with even advanced products only achieving 14% of their maximum theoretical efficiency." He called on governments to "aggressively" raise energy efficiency standards.

"We are always happy to work with anyone or any entity - certainly including Sir Branson - to ensure economical, energy efficient cooling solutions are available and utilised around the world," said Dietz.

While AHRI members make products and equipment at many different levels of efficiency and prices to suit market demands, Dietz warned: "Ironically, it is when mandated efficiency levels reach points at which equipment is too expensive for certain customers that they turn to less efficient alternatives, including room AC units."

The AHRI, which represents major US air conditioning manufacturers Carrier, Johnson Controls and Ingersoll Rand, as well as the US subsidiaries of Japanese manufacturers Daikin and Mitsubishi Electric, says its members are committed to energy efficiency and environmental stewardship, collectively spending millions of dollars each year on R&D.

Sir Richard Branson is backing a new \$3m initiative, backed by the government of India, to find a more efficient residential cooling technology.

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