

LOCALWednesday, March 10, 2010

Garapan family gets free energy-efficient appliances**By Haidee V. Eugenio
Reporter**

A family in Garapan had their old appliances replaced with new and energy-efficient ones for free, thanks to a federally funded energy program that is expected to benefit at least eight more families this month.

Concepcion Kus, 70, said she's thankful that her household now has a new and free refrigerator, two window-type air-conditioning units and light bulbs as part of the CNMI Division of Energy's Weatherization Assistance Program.

The Kus family is the first one to benefit from the program, which received \$795,000 in funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act last year.

The program provides financial assistance "to reduce energy costs for low-income families, particularly for the elderly, people with disabilities and children by improving the energy efficiency of their homes while ensuring their health and safety."

Lt. Gov. Eloy S. Inos led government officials yesterday afternoon in a brief ceremony to "weatherize" Kus's residence, located behind the D' Torres Building and JG Sablan Ice and Water building in Garapan.

Energy director Thelma Inos said the Kus residence received less than \$2,000 worth of energy-efficient appliances, although the program could provide eligible low-income households up to \$2,500 worth of energy-efficient appliances.

"We basically hauled away their old refrigerator and other appliances and replaced them with new ones. Our division is working closely with the Department of Community and Cultural Affairs which refers families to us, and then we check whether these households meet our program standards," Inos told Saipan Tribune.

Lorraine Seman, program manager of the Division of Energy's Weatherization Assistance Program, said at least eight more families will be awarded energy-efficient appliances this month.

Seman said those with weatherized households as a result of the program will be able to realize "15 to 20 percent reduction" in their power bills every month.

"That would be a huge savings for these families," she said.

She said the Kus family's application for WAP eligibility had been granted in less than a month.

The Weatherization Assistance Program is a residential energy efficiency program initiated by the U.S. Department of Energy in Washington, D.C. in 1976. The CNMI was included in the program only in March 2009 under the stimulus funding law.

In the CNMI, the Department of Public Works' Division of Energy is the recipient of WAP funds and is responsible for the implementation of the program.

Only those with primary owned dwellings are eligible to receive program benefits, along with elderly persons 60 years and older, families or persons with disabilities, families with children, high residential energy users, and household with a high energy burden.

Besides Inos and Division of Energy officials, also present at yesterday's brief ceremony were DCCA

Secretary Melvin L.O. Faisao, Commerce Secretary Michael Ada, Deputy Commerce Secretary Sixto Igisomar, Public Works Secretary Martin Sablan, and press secretary Angel Demapan.

More information about the Weatherization Assistance Program are available at the CNMI Division of Energy's Web site at www.cnmienergy.com, or by calling 664-4480 or 81.

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