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THAT "DIFFERENT" SOUND IN YOUR KITCHEN

If you bought a new refrigerator within the past few years, you've probably noticed that it sounds "different." Here's why.

New refrigerators use only half as much electricity as older models. In fact, a new, 20.6 cubic foot refrigerator with top freezer uses no more electricity than a 75-watt light bulb.

Most new refrigerators are significantly larger and have such added conveniences as automatic defrost systems, icemakers and perhaps even a "built in" look. These features can cause changes in the sounds commonly associated with refrigeration operation, including:

A high-pitched whine -- from energy-efficient compressors that have smaller, higher speed motors;

A soft hum -- from the evaporator fan in the freezer and/or condenser fan under the refrigerator;

Clicks -- from the automatic defrost timer's switching on and off, the thermostat's turning the refrigerator on and off, or the water valve's refilling the icemaker;

Boiling or gurgling/trickling water -- from the refrigerant circulating in the sealed system or the trickling of defrost water into the drain pan when the refrigerator shuts off; or

Running water and thuds -- from the filling of the ice cube tray and ice cubes' falling into the storage bin.

To help reduce these new sounds, make sure the refrigerator is level and the defrost water collection pan is in position (usually reachable behind the bottom front "toe plate"). Put carpet or sound-absorbing ceiling tile on the wall behind the refrigerator, and allow enough space between the back of the refrigerator and the wall, unless the refrigerator is designed to be built in. Check your Use and Care book for the needed space.

To reduce compressor run time, vacuum the compressor coils twice a year, more often if you have pets; and keep your freezer at least three-fourths full, filling empty space with jugs of water.

Some consumers report their refrigerators are "louder" than an identical model in a friend or relative's home. This may be due to the number of people in the house, as well as different

furnishings and room arrangements. Carpeting, draperies, upholstered furniture and wall coverings help muffle refrigerator sounds, which are most noticeable in quiet surroundings. Consumers with hearing aids are especially sensitive to the sounds.