News

Air conditioners now a hot commodity

BY MATT ROCHELEAU FOR THE SUN CHRONICLE Tuesday, June 10, 2008 2:51 AM EDT

Junior Santiago of Cumberland, R.I., and his 1-year-old son Elijah check out air conditioners at Lowe's in North Attleboro Monday. (Staff photo by Mike George)

Air conditioners are a hot item for area residents looking to cool off from record high temperatures.

Daily shipments of air conditioners at the Wal-Mart in North Attleboro sold out in an average of 20 minutes after their arrival this past weekend, said store manager Karen.

The store has found itself out of stock for about 12 hours at a time each day, with the sale of air conditioners totaling $55,000 since Friday, she said.

And it's a similar story in other area stores.

"It's been a bit of a frenzy," said Trish, an assistant manager at The Home Depot in South Attleboro, who compared air conditioner sales during the area's first heat wave of the season to the rush for shovels and snow-blowers before the first snow storm of winter. The store sold an estimated 600 air conditioners and 250 fans over the past weekend.

Eric Dieffenbach, general manager of Bernie's in North Attleboro, estimated his store's air conditioner sales to be well into the hundreds, adding he also bought one for his home because of the heat and humidity.

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At Lowe's in North Attleboro, customer John McCarron was pushing a cart with three air conditioners on it.

He said the main factor in deciding which models to consider was price, adding that he had bought another three units earlier Monday morning.

"It's been beautiful," McCarron said of the summer-like weather.

He said he spent some time at the beach over the weekend to keep cool.

Other customers at Lowe's said energy efficiency was a factor in their purchases.

"I'm hoping to save some money on the electricity bill," said Jim Schwab of Pawtucket.

He said he was replacing four older air conditioners in his home for more energy efficient models.

Junior Santiago of Cumberland, R.I., said he came to Lowe's after discovering Wal-Mart was out of air conditioners. Santiago said he had to buy a third unit for his apartment to keep his 1-year-old son, Elijah, cool.

Lowe's was not allowed to disclose its sales or inventory numbers.

Some air conditioner shoppers were divided on just how hot it seemed outdoors.

"It hasn't been too bad, yet. I work outside. I'm used to it," Shawn Gibson said of the recent weather while looking at air conditioners at Lowe's Monday afternoon.

"I think it's very hot," countered Shana Gibson.

The couple had purchased an air conditioner at Bernie's earlier.

"It's been crazy. I can't wait to go to lunch. It's going to be like 450 degrees in my car," said Greg, a Bernie's associate from North Providence, R.I.

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