

Media Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

KELVIN Talking Thermostat is Introduced at Chicago AHR Expo

(Chicago, IL) – KELVIN, a fully programmable voice-interactive talking thermostat, was introduced today at the AHR Expo. This patented technology enables temperature in the home to be adjusted by either pushing the large tactually marked “up” or “down” buttons, or by speaking to the thermostat and saying “raise” or “lower”. KELVIN will then verbally confirm the new temperature level to which it has been set.

KELVIN is fully programmable for automatic temperature adjustments for morning, daytime, evening and night. Heating or air conditioning settings can be programmed individually for each day of the week, resulting in energy savings during days, such as weekends or vacations, when the home is unoccupied.

All buttons used for programming are recessed and covered to avoid accidental re-setting, and, in normal operation, only the tactile “up” and “down” buttons are accessible. If either of these buttons is pushed, KELVIN announces the day, the time, the ambient room temperature and the thermostat setting. Pushing the button again adjusts the temperature by one degree and KELVIN will verbally confirm the new temperature setting.

Temperature settings can also be adjusted by saying “raise” or “lower”, and KELVIN will make the same announcements and adjustments as it does when manually using the buttons. However, before saying “raise” or “lower” the user must speak the magic activation word, which is “thermostat”. During tests and work with focus groups, it was found that without an activation word, a poker game with players shouting “I raise” could result in a really hot game.

KELVIN was developed as a talking thermostat to meet the special needs of people who are blind or sight impaired, and who cannot visually control the temperature settings in their homes. A considerable amount of assistance, input and testing was provided by the Rehabilitation and Engineering Research Center on Technology Transfer (T²RERC) at the State University of New York at Buffalo. The T²RERC is funded by the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR) of the US Department of Education. During tests and with the input of focus groups organized and conducted by T²RERC, voice interactive speech was added to accommodate people who are in wheelchairs, and who are not able to get close enough to their thermostats to operate them manually.

It has been estimated that there are currently over 30 million Americans who are visually handicapped or physically challenged, to whom standard programmable thermostats are not accessible. Additionally, the interactive speech function makes KELVIN ideal for use by baby-boomers, the elderly, operators of retirement communities, designers of accessible hotel rooms and even for young “techie” who want to be the first in their neighborhood to own the latest technological advance in home heating controls.

KELVIN is a product of Action Talking Products LLC, a company formed by the inventor, Scott Flood, Independent Living Aids, Inc., and the National Federation of the Blind. Scott Flood, the inventor of the KELVIN, is a practicing attorney in New Hampshire with a specialty in Patent Law. Independent Living Aids, located in Jericho, NY, is the country’s oldest privately-held company supplying products nationally for people who are blind or visually impaired. The National Federation of the Blind, located in Baltimore, MD, is America’s largest organization of blind people, with more than 50,000 members.

KELVIN has been successfully tested by, and marketed to blind people, and has been enthusiastically received. It was one of the devices selected to be included in the ABC television show “Extreme Makeover: Home Improvements” in a 2-hour special on the building of a home for a man who had been blinded during a random shooting spree by a deranged individual.

In the usual course of events, technology in the “big world” market is modified and adapted to the special needs of people who are handicapped. In a turnabout, KELVIN is a product that was originally developed for people who are blind or visually impaired and is now breaking out into the general home heating and air conditioning market.