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# Time running out for companies to meet carbon rules

**Angela Jameson**

With two days to go before businesses have to comply with new government regulations on cutting carbon emissions, most companies are woefully unprepared, surveys show.

Those that consume more than 6,000 megawatt hours of electricity a year will have to sign up for the energy efficiency scheme and will face a £5,000 fine if they do not register by September.

The Carbon Reduction Commit-

ment programme, which begins on April 1, will affect large companies and organisations in the service sector, including supermarkets, retailers, pub operators, banks, hotels and local authorities. Yet, according to npower's annual Business Energy Index, 44 per cent of companies questioned believe that the level of guidance has been inadequate and 79 per cent think that Britain's legally binding target to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 80 per cent by 2050 is unrealistic.

Another survey of the 100 biggest

public and private sector organisations in Britain for Solar Gard, a window film manufacturer, shows that nearly half of those who know that they will be required to take part in the scheme do not know when they are supposed to register.

Initially, about 5,000 businesses will have to take part in the programme, but a further 20,000 may be drawn into it in the next few years.

The Government hopes that the scheme will save industry £1 billion a year in energy costs and will reduce

carbon emissions by four million tonnes a year.

In the first phase of the programme, companies will be able to buy unlimited allowances for the amount of energy that they expect to use. The allowances will cost £12 per tonne of carbon.

In the second phase, from 2013, a fixed amount of allowances will be traded, as in the existing European Union Emissions Trading Scheme, which involves power generators and large industrial users of energy.