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ELECTRICAL EQUIPMENT

Appliance makers offer repair services

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Electrical appliance firms have launched special service programmes to help flood-hit customers repair their products after the floods recede.

Singer Plc sent several mobile teams with over 300 technicians to flood-hit areas nationwide to repair electrical appliances for free. It will offer to buy back damaged appliances if they cannot be repaired for 1,000 to 4,000 baht, depending on the product.

Sony, LG and Panasonic are playing along, offering special discounts for repairs and spare parts. And Power Buy, an electrical appliance retail chain, will allow payments over a 24-month span instead of 10 months for electrical appliance purchases.

An industry source said the 100-billion-baht electrical appliance market will have

zero to negative growth this year, the first time in three years, due to many negative factors.

The weather was not as scorching as usual in the summer, resulting in a dip of refrigerator and air-conditioner sales. Japan's tsunami in March led to a shortage of imported LED and LCD TVs, while the current floods are hurting sales as well.

Boonyong Tansakul, managing director of Singer, expects its sales this year will grow by 15% to 2.4 billion baht, with net profit reaching 100 million baht. Of total sales, 95% will come from provincial markets and 5% from Bangkok.

Singer sells its products via door-to-door sales. During the floods, its sales representatives were encouraged to be active in dry areas. The company expects to sell 1,500 water pumps this year, up from 800 units last year, and 300 plastic

boats. "Despite the floods, we are still collecting debts on 91% of total accounts, only 1% lower than a regular year," said Mr Boonyong.

Sony Thai plans to import products for sale in Thailand while its Ayutthaya productions are flooded.

It is studying installing new machines to produce its digital cameras temporarily at its car audio plant in Chon Buri, a source noted.

An executive at LG Electronics (Thailand) Co said it set up special teams to offer free check-ups and repair for LG products with a 30% discount on spare parts. Customers can contact all LG Service Centres for free service until the end of this month.

The company will postpone some marketing campaigns to next year and cut its sales growth target to 10% from 15%.