

Newspapers, Thursday, September 13th

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- > 2,000 old dying each winter because heat is too costly -
- > Independent
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- > As many as 2,000 elderly people are dying prematurely in Ireland
- > every winter because they cannot afford to heat their homes,
- > according to new research.
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- > The UCD report blames "fuel poverty" the inability to heat homes
- > properly because of low income for the tragic deaths.
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- > The research, presented yesterday at a major University College
- > Dublin environmental conference, also reveals that fuel poverty
- > affects precisely one in ten pensioners living alone and a
- > staggering 133,000 households nationwide.
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- > The phenomenon of fuel poverty is also blamed on poor household
- > energy efficiency.
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- > A remarkable total of 9.2pc of the population are affected,
- > including almost one in five lone parents with children aged less
- > than 16 years.
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- > They are unable to afford adequate warmth in their homes,
- > according to the report by John D Healy of the UCD Department of
- > Environmental Studies. And the report, the first-ever study into
- > the effects of fuel poverty, also reveals that another high-risk
- > group are single adults aged 30-64, with 11.3pc affected.
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- > "Lone pensioners are also at risk, with exactly 10pc of old
- > people living alone unable to heat their homes properly," it
- > shows.
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- > The report concludes: "This high level of fuel poverty is in no
- > small part responsible for the high levels of excess winter
- > deaths found in Ireland every year in which 2,000 mainly old and
- > vulnerable people die prematurely from cold-related causes."
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- > It also highlights "remarkably high" rates of fuel poverty among
- > rent-paying tenants, with one in five affected compared with just
- > 4.5pc for owner-occupiers. Some 22.2pc of unemployed and 19.4pc
- > of social-welfare recipients are also hit.
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- > Describing the phenomenon as a serious social, environmental and
- > public-health issue, the report also highlights the fact that
- > almost 100,000 Irish homes have inadequate heating systems. It
- > says some 256,000 homes or 21.3pc of households in Ireland did
- > not have central heating or electric storage heaters in a
- > three-year period. And 6.9pc of households were unable to keep up
- > to date with their utility bills.
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- > A finding that 115,000 homes (9.6pc) were suffering from damp was
- > described as particularly important for public health.
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- > Provisional results from a comparison with other countries show

- > that Ireland appeared to have among the highest rates of fuel
- > poverty in Northern Europe at a time when Ireland's GDP was now
- > above the EU average.
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- > The report recommends that the State target the low-income risk
- > groups of pensioners, tenants, social-welfare recipients and the
- > unemployed in a programme aimed at eradicating fuel poverty. This
- > could include subsidies to help them upgrade their homes to
- > energy-efficient standards.
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- > According to the research the proportion of Irish households
- > equipped with cavity-wall insulation is poor, with only Austria,
- > Denmark and the UK performing worse.
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- > And Ireland had the lowest proportion of double-glazed dwellings
- > of 11 northern European countries.
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