



Learn about vampire power

According to energy experts, about 5 to 10 percent of a home's electricity is used by appliances that are in standby mode. In Ohio, that means between \$46 and \$93 per year could be saved on an electric bill if consumers learned which of their electronics and other household items are in standby mode and took action to reduce this consumption of power. This loss of electricity also is referred to as vampire power.

Standby mode occurs when some products are not in use but are still plugged into an electrical outlet while the power is recharging a battery or waiting to be turned on by remote control. The Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel, the residential utility consumer advocate, provides this fact sheet to help consumers understand the basics of vampire power and gain knowledge about how to control energy usage.



Q. Which appliances use vampire power?

A. Many everyday appliances use power while in standby mode. The use and amount of power depends on the individual product; however, some of the types of appliances include:

- Compact stereos
- Satellite/cable boxes
- Televisions
- DVD, VCR and Digital Video Recorder (DVR) equipment
- Video game consoles
- Computers and monitors
- Printers
- Microwaves
- Rechargeable vacuums
- Room air conditioners

Q. When did appliances begin using vampire power?

A. In the late 1960s, televisions began to be built with "instant-on" technology. This technology

eliminated the need for one to two minutes of warm up time televisions commonly required. This technology began the trend toward standby power.

Q. Which appliances waste the most vampire power?

A. While consumers have different usage habits and their homes vary in terms of how many appliances use standby power, computers, monitors, satellite/cable boxes and compact stereos often consume a significant amount of electricity when they are not being used. For example, a computer and monitor, both in "sleep mode," can use about 28 watts of power. A digital cable box, television, DVD player and video game console can use about 24 watts of standby power. By comparison, when a light bulb is turned on, it typically uses between 40 and 75 watts.

Experts indicate that in the future, consumers may use greater amounts of standby power due to more products being constructed with microchips and more appliances being linked to computer networks.

Q. Is some vampire power necessary?

A. Yes. The same type of power that is wasted by some appliances is helping to charge cellular telephones and monitor some refrigerators' temperatures. Experts indicate, however, that most standby power is a waste partly because of the inefficient AC adaptors that many electronic products use. Currently, many AC adaptors waste as much as 50 percent of the power used. These adaptors are the plastic power supply units that typically connect to the electronic product at one end and to the wall socket at the other end. The adaptors change the electrical current and voltage coming out of products so they can be used by consumers to recharge batteries, including those in cellular telephones and digital cameras.

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Q. What can consumers do to help control or eliminate vampire power?

- A. Consumers should be aware of which appliances are in standby mode when they are not in use. Consult the owner's manuals of electronic items and other products for details about how much power is being used and whether it is appropriate to unplug the devices. The amount of standby power can sometimes be found in the page of the manual containing the product's specifications. Be sure to consider if unplugging an appliance could erase personal settings or other data that has been programmed.

Here are some tips to help control the amount of power being wasted through some commonly-used appliances:

- Monitor the charging of products such as cell phones and digital camera batteries to ensure their AC adaptors are only plugged in when they are recharging. Many products have a light or power bar that indicates when the batteries are fully charged (for example, a red light may change to green).
- Shut down a computer instead of only logging off. Turn off the monitor instead of letting it sit in sleep mode.
- Consider unplugging electronic products

that have a standby mode when away from home for several days or more.

- Consumers using power strips may find it convenient to simply switch off the strip to help eliminate vampire power coming from multiple appliances. Be sure to first properly shut down any computers plugged into the power strip.

Q. What should consumers know when purchasing a new appliance?

- A. Consumers should be sure to consider energy efficient appliances when shopping. The Energy Star logo is used to designate products meeting or exceeding federal efficiency standards. The Energy Star program has expanded to include AC adaptors used by cellular telephones and other devices. Appliances with the Energy Star logo may cost more money up front, but will save consumers money over the life of the product.

Consumers can contact their local utilities for more information on currently available energy efficiency programs. These efforts provide several incentives and when combined with steps used to control vampire power can reduce the amount of electricity used monthly.

The Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel is an equal opportunity employer and provider of services.

For additional information from the Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel:

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