

Energy Vampires



Powering down electronics does not always stop them from using electricity. Many appliances display small, bright lights that signify standby mode, in which they use a small amount of energy while turned off. These small lights that haunt our homes at night notify us of energy vampires that suck electricity from the grid while we sleep.

Typical energy vampires include stereos, TVs, computers, microwaves, TV satellite systems, and cell phone chargers. These electronics are constantly wasting energy while not in use, even though seemingly powered off.

Even though a microwave or computer alone may not use much energy in standby mode, the energy being wasted across our schools and homes really adds up – it accounts for up to 5% of the energy use in a home. Across the United States, Americans waste \$5.8 billion dollars every year on the energy used by appliances in standby mode. Imagine what every household in the U.S. could do with the money saved by reducing energy waste.

Most power plants burn natural gas or coal to generate electricity. When fossil fuels are burned, greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide are released into the atmosphere where they trap heat and contribute to global climate change. Wasted electricity emits 87 billion pounds of carbon dioxide into our atmosphere each year, which is equal to the weight of over 5.2 million African Elephants!

Stopping energy waste is simple and is usually inexpensive to do. The easiest way to stop waste is to plug Energy Vampires into a power strip or surge protector. These are long strips with outlets that are controlled by the main power switch. When you plug your appliances into a power strip and flip the switch off, the power strip cuts off electricity to these appliances. In some cases, it makes sense to unplug appliances completely. If you take either of these two simple actions to slay Energy Vampires, you'll be able to save your household money, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and conserve energy resources.

