Standby Power

Why we care

Standby power, sometimes called phantom energy, represents a small but growing portion of home energy use. Roughly 50 devices and appliances in the typical American household are always drawing power, even when they appear to be off. A walk through your house in the dark will reveal the glow of small lights and digital displays on various electronic appliances. Because these appliances are ready to operate at all times, they continue to suck up electricity.

The largest users of standby power are cable boxes, audio/video devices, TVs, desktop computers and monitors, printers, and security systems. Other culprits include garage door openers, wireless routers, and microwaves. Additionally, most chargers for cell phones, laptops, digital cameras, and music players draw power whenever they are plugged into an outlet, even when they are not in use.

Simple, positive change

- Unplug devices that are rarely used. For computer or home entertainment systems, plug all components into a power strip, or surge protector, and turn them all off at the end of the day with a single switch.
- When unplugging your phone (or other device being charged), unplug the charger as well.
- Adjust power settings on TVs (quick start can be disabled), computers (sleep mode), and game consoles (instant on can be disabled).
- When buying electronics and appliances, select Energy Star models that use less energy and lower standby.
- Borrow a watt-meter from the library, measure the devices in your home, and take targeted action. Or refer to the Berkeley Lab chart at http://standby.lbl.gov/summary-table.html.

Questions or feedback? Contact Jeanne Roy at jeanne@earthleaders.org.