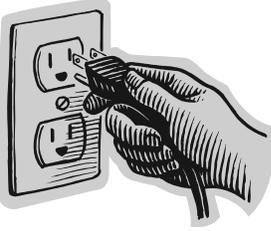


Sometimes Hitting the “Off” Switch isn’t Enough!



With the rising costs of just about everything people are constantly looking for ways to save money, and utilities are no exception. Many consumers have adopted practices such as turning off the lights when they aren't occupying a room, turning down the thermostat prior to leaving home, and replacing old appliances with those that are Energy Star certified. Although all of those measures can be effective in helping to cut energy costs, industry experts are urging consumers to go a step further in order to see true savings in their electricity bills. According to the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, "A surprisingly large number of electrical products - - from air conditioners to VCRs - - cannot be switched off completely without being unplugged. These products draw power 24 hours a day..."¹ The power that household electronics continue to consume, although their switches may be in the "off" position is referred to as "Standby Power".

Most items that use a remote control, have an AC adapter, or a digital display consume standby power. As reported by O Magazine, standby power accounts for, "Seventy-five percent of the electricity consumed by home electronics, and about 8 percent of total residential electricity use" (Thomas, p. 92).² You can't look at the expenses generated from standby power without also considering the savings if one simply unplugged a cell phone charger that wasn't in use, or turned off the surge protector connected to your entertainment unit. Simple actions such as these that can save the average consumer hundreds of dollars a year.

There are only two certain ways to find out which items, when not in use, are accounting for the majority of your electricity bill. "An exact reading of the standby power drawn by an individual appliance can be obtained only by using a fairly expensive energy meter or by turning off all the rest of a home's appliances and checking the utility meter," (Ray, D2).³ The Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory is an industry leader in studying the affects and consumption of standby power. For additional information about how the amount of electricity used by your electronics you can visit their website at <http://standby.lbl.gov/Data/SummaryChart.html>.

It is also important that consumers "Don't Believe the Hype" associated with leaving on your computer will make it last longer. Not only is that a myth, it's waste of energy and money. If you are going to take a break from your computer, then put it in sleep mode after 5-10 minutes of idleness, and turn it off when you are done. Remember – the money spent associated with standby power is enough to power your home for one month each year!

¹ <http://standby.lbl.gov/index.html>

² Thomas, Louisa, "Cut the Cord", *O, The Oprah Magazine*, November 2007, p. 90

³ Ray, Claiborne, "Always On", *The New York Times*, December 11, 2007. D2.