

Vampire Appliances

Short communication

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Most American homes have almost 2 dozen vampire appliances that consume energy daily-even when they are turned off. These appliances, which are not really off, but in stand-by mode, cost more than 1 billion dollars per year in energy expenses. They continuously use power so their features will still work when switched off, such as digital video recorders that tape programs when no one is home. With many vampire appliances in a typical home, the extra energy costs add up quickly.

According to a report by Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, stand-by power needs of appliances vary greatly. One television evaluated by the Lab used only 0.7 watts of stand-by power to maintain convenience features, while another consumed 14 watts for the same functions. Because stand-by power consumption can be traced to

power transformers within the appliance, energy efficiency levels of the transformers themselves vary greatly. The average cost of electricity in New York State is 13.9 cents per kilowatt-hour. At this rate, a high energy-consuming TV uses over \$14 per year while in stand-by mode. An energy-efficient TV, on the other hand, uses only 69 cents worth of electricity per year.

The US. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) reported that the amount of electricity consumed by vampire appliances in a year is equivalent to the annual output of 12 power plants. To minimize vampire appliances' energy consumption, homeowners should plug them into smart power strips that turn off the appliances when they enter stand-by mode. When purchasing new appliances, consumers should look for the ENERGY STAR label. These appliances use 30 percent less energy than standard appliances and 50 percent less energy than their standard counterparts both when operating and in stand-by mode.