

Hunting down vampire electronics

by Scott Gates

Most homes these days never quite shut down for the night. Although lamps may be off, dark rooms are typically spotted with tiny red and green lights of appliances and the glow of digital clocks.

All of those little lights, clocks, and seemingly “sleeping” appliances, however, are using more electricity than most would think. Sometimes called vampire electronics, these devices suck up 5 percent of all energy used in the United States and cost consumers more than \$3 billion every year.

For the average homeowner, vampire electronics can add 20 percent to monthly electric bills, according to the U.S. Department of Energy. To trim this excess energy use, you need to know where these vampires reside and keep them in check.



Take a closer look at appliances around your home. Those that use remote controls such as TVs, DVD players, ceiling fans, and stereos are suspect. Any digital displays, such as microwave and coffee machine clocks, are working against your electric bill. And many of those chargers around the house—those that keep cell phones, power tools, and MP3 players at the ready—constantly draw power when plugged in.



Unplugging these vampires effectively drives a stake into their energy-consuming hearts. Power strips provide another way to thwart them. Simply plug appliances into a power strip, and switch it off when those appliances aren't being used.

In addition, unplug any battery-operated electronic device once charged. You wouldn't walk away from a flowing water hose, after all, and you certainly don't want to keep feeding those vampires.

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