

Standby Power

Frequently Asked Questions

What is standby power?

Some appliances and electronic equipment use electricity even when turned off. This is called standby power, phantom load or vampire electricity. Standby power accounts for an estimated 6% of average U.S. household electric use – a total of 43 billion kilowatt-hours per year.

Some standby power is useful – without it we couldn't use remote controls or automatically record TV programs. Other uses are not needed, such as cell phone and battery chargers plugged in but not in use.

How can I reduce standby power use?

- Use a Watts Up portable energy meter from your public library to find out which equipment uses power when turned off.
- Unplug cell chargers, audio and video equipment and other electronic equipment when not in use.
- Use a switched power strip to turn off several pieces of equipment at once.
- A specially designed “smart” power strip can automatically shut off several sockets when the equipment plugged into a master socket is turned off. You can use this device to shut down the power to your printer, wireless router and scanner just by turning off the computer. A smart strip can also shut off power to your audio and video equipment by turning off the TV or system receiver.
- Look for the ENERGY STAR® label when buying appliances and equipment. ENERGY STAR qualified equipment uses less standby power.
- When possible, avoid buying equipment with soft touch controls, clocks or remote functions that are not needed.

(continued on reverse)



How much energy can be saved?

Standby electric use varies with individual equipment, but here is the typical consumption for several types of equipment that can be unplugged when not in use.

Equipment	Typical Standby Use	Annual Cost	\$0	\$5	\$10	\$15	CO ₂ Emitted/Yr
Television	4 watts	\$3.80	████████				65 lbs
VCR	6 watts	\$5.69	██████████				97 lbs
DVD	2 watts	\$1.90	████				32 lbs
Cable box	12 watts	\$11.39	████████████████████				194 lbs
Satellite receiver	15 watts	\$14.24	██████████████████████				243 lbs
Component stereo	7 watts	\$6.64	██████████				113 lbs
Game console	1 watt	\$0.95	██				16 lbs
Cell phone charger	2 watts	\$1.90	████				32 lbs
Desktop computer	4 watts	\$3.80	████████				65 lbs
Notebook computer	1 watt	\$0.95	██				16 lbs
Computer monitor	1 watt	\$0.95	██				16 lbs
Modem	5 watts	\$4.75	████████				81 lbs
Wireless router	2 watts	\$1.90	████				32 lbs
Ink-jet printer	2 watts	\$1.90	████				32 lbs
Rechargeable power tool	4 watts	\$4.18	████████				71 lbs
Battery charger	2 watts	\$2.09	████				36 lbs

Cutting out the standby usage of this list of items would save \$67 and eliminate 1,140 pounds of carbon dioxide output per year.

Where can I find resources to help reduce standby power use?

- Watts Up portable energy meters are available for free checkout at local public libraries throughout the MGE area.
- Smart or energy-saving power strips are available in many hardware, electronics and building supply retailers.
- For more information on ENERGY STAR appliances and standards, visit energystar.gov.
- Federal Energy Management Program information on how to buy products with low standby power: www1.eere.energy.gov/femp/procurement/eep_standby_power.html