

The Scary Truth about Vampire and Phantom Loads
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Have you ever looked at your power bill and wondered why after being away for a few weeks it's still high? Well, this could be due to vampire or phantom loads. The terms vampire or phantom loads refer to energy used by devices that are switched off or in stand-by mode. While individually the power used on these devices can be quite small, all together they can add up to a significant amount of power wasted. Such devices can include cell phone chargers, VCRs, DVD players, audio systems, microwave ovens, computers, devices with remote control receivers, and devices with a light-up clock.

Think about when you switch off your lights at night and see all those little green or red lights on your television, cable box, or DVD player. Those devices are using power while on stand-by mode. Now, how many of your electric devices really need to be plugged in all the time? Of course, a few of them need to stay plugged in. For instance, you probably know that your refrigerator is always using power but should stay plugged in. For appliances like this, when it is time to replace them, buy Energy Star rated appliances to reduce your energy consumption. You can visit <http://www.energystar.gov/> for more information on the energy star rating system. Now, here are easy ways to deal with devices that are not in constant use. Use a power strip. At a flip of a switch, you can place your television, DVD player, gaming console, and audio system back on stand-by mode. Smart strips are also available. These work by using a master device. So, for example, you have your computer, printer, and scanner plugged into a smart strip. When you turn off your computer, it will also completely turn off the printer and scanner on the smart strip. For other devices you use occasionally, unplug them until you need them again.

If you are curious about the specific energy consumption of your appliances and electronic equipment, a device called a Kill A Watt can be purchased for around \$20. By plugging your electrical device into the Kill A Watt, you can immediately see its energy usage in kilowatt hours. The Kill A Watt also calculates voltage, line frequency, current, and power factor.

For more information on vampire loads or for more energy saving tips, please visit the U.S. Department of Energy's website at www.energy.gov.

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