

## **Forget the Zombie Apocalypse, We're Being Invaded by Energy Vampires**

This Halloween, we'll be seeing tons of spooky creatures and supernatural monsters out on the streets, but the scariest monster is lurking every day right in your own home: the energy vampire! An "energy vampire" is an electronic appliance or device that still uses energy when it's plugged in, even if it's turned off. All of these monsters can eat up more power than a trick-or-treater generates after eating all of his candy!

Most energy vampires go into "standby" mode, where they continuously suck a trickle of electricity (called a "phantom load") to power features such as clocks, digital displays, timers, and LED status lights. Yes, that means your glowing microwave clock is actually a creature of the night!

Electronics that use remote controls (such as home entertainment systems and televisions) also drain power in standby mode because they need to detect when you click "on". However, devices without digital displays or clocks or that have a switch that physically breaks the circuit (such as most hair dryers and lamps) are not energy vampires.

How can a handful of energy vampires actually matter? Did you know that the typical modern household uses 20-40 energy vampire appliances? And they're hungry creatures. They account for 5-10% of a household's total electricity use. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, that adds up to about \$100 per year for each household, or more than \$10 billion in annual energy costs nationwide!

But it's not just your wallet that's in danger; energy vampires are sucking the environment dry, too! In fact, to generate the electricity needed to feed energy vampires in the U.S. for one year, fossil-fuel power plants produce an estimated 100 billion pounds of carbon dioxide and other air pollutants. This is equal to the emissions of almost 10 million cars!

Some energy vampires that might be draining your wallet include:

- DVRs (digital video recorders) & set-top cable and satellite boxes
- TVs (especially LCD and plasma TVs)
- Video game consoles
- Computers (desktops & notebooks)
- Microwaves
- Chargers (e.g. for cell phones, MP3 players, notebook computers, tablets, etc.)
- DVD players
- Home audio systems

The City of Moreno Valley has partnered with Southern California Edison, Southern California Gas Company and The Energy Coalition through the Community Energy Partnership\* to help you defeat energy and money-wasting monsters like these. Here are some tips on how to slay energy vampires in your own home:

- **Unplug devices** when they're not being used. Energy vampires can't suck your home's electricity if they aren't connected to a wall outlet! Of course, it may not be feasible to unplug every energy vampire in your home, but it's easy and practical to unplug appliances in areas not frequently used, such as a guest room or garage. Finally, be sure to unplug rechargeable items as soon as they're done charging.
- **Use a power strip or surge protector:** While it saves energy to unplug every appliance when it's not in use, it may also be inconvenient or even difficult if the outlet is in a hard to reach place. The solution? Plug appliances into an easily accessible power strip or surge protector and simply turn the entire power strip off when the devices aren't being used. This conveniently cuts off the electricity from greedy energy vampires!
- **Buy weaker energy vampires:** You may not be able to completely avoid energy vampires in this digital age, but you can choose to buy and use appliances that drain less energy than others when in standby mode.

Here are some useful websites that can help you figure out how to minimize the appetites of your energy vampires:

- Southern California Edison offers a series of YouTube videos, including this one with a brief introduction to energy vampires: <http://youtu.be/7EsWSz6bIEE>
- ENERGY STAR's website explains in detail about energy vampires and offers tips on energy efficient products and practices: <http://www.energystar.gov/index.cfm?c=about.vampires>
- The U.S. Department of Energy's list of low standby power devices can help guide you on what types of appliances to buy: [http://www1.eere.energy.gov/femp/technologies/standby\\_power.aspx](http://www1.eere.energy.gov/femp/technologies/standby_power.aspx)
- The Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory measured and listed the power levels of many common household devices in standby and active modes: <http://standby.lbl.gov/summary-table.html>

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