SAVING ENERGY ON HOME ELECTRONICS

Did you know that common household electronics are the fastest-growing category of energy use in the home? Electronic "plug loads" include televisions, stereos, digital video recorders (DVRs), cell phone chargers, computers, laptops, video game consoles, and anything else you plug in that has an on-off switch (and even some that don't). What's really surprising is that many of these plug loads draw power when plugged in, even when they are switched off!

Of the different types of household electronics, plasma TVs, DVRs, and desktop computers are among the largest energy consumers in the average home. No matter what type of plug load you're talking about, it's always a good idea to consider electronic consumption when shopping for birthday or holiday gifts. How much will that electric towel warmer cost to operate? Or a digital photo frame?

Here are some tips to reduce the energy consumption of your home electronics:

- **Unplug electronic devices.** Unplug small appliances such as cell phone and iPod chargers when they're not in use. Almost anything with a power supply draws a surprising amount of power. (A power supply is usually a black box at the end or in the middle of a power cord that converts electricity from alternating current [AC] to direct current [DC]). This includes printers that you might use only occasionally, video game consoles, and laptops. You should unplug those, too. Some devices have both a standby and an off mode—using the off mode will save energy.
- **Use power strips.** Instead of unplugging numerous individual components, one option is to plug them into a power strip. You can turn off the power strip when you're done using the devices. Another option is to use "smart" power strips that automatically turn off plug loads when they're not in use.
- **Set power management features on your device.** Your computer already has power management features built into the operating system, accessible through the power options icon in the control panel for Microsoft Windows, or through the energy saver (lightbulb) icon under system preferences on a Mac. At a minimum, set computers to go into sleep mode when idle for more than 15 or 20 minutes and to turn off when you are away from your desk for an hour or more. In addition, new liquid crystal display (LCD) and plasma TVs usually have a power-saving mode you can select.
- **Buy energy-efficient electronics.** Look for the ENERGY STAR® logo when shopping for a new TV, digital-to-analog converter box, DVD player, VCR, stereo system, computer, printer, or copier. You may see "Save More" stickers in some electronics stores to indicate energy-efficient TVs and similar products.

Energy use of electronics has grown to an average of 15 to 20 percent of a household's annual energy use, and may grow to almost one-third of the average home's energy use by 2030. So if you are interested in reducing energy costs, home electronics are a good place to start!

HOME ELECTRONICS—THE FASTEST-GROWING CATEGORY OF HOME ENERGY USE.

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