

**POOR IS THE NEW RICH: A WEEKLY SURVIVAL GUIDE**

**'Vampires' haunt home electronics**

By **CARLEY THORNELL**

Beware the vampires! Experts warn it's hard to escape their clutches at home, where "vampire electronics" may be bleeding your budget dry.

So-called vampire devices — a broad category including coffeemakers, computers and night lights — suck wattage out of the power grid even when "sleeping," plugged in and not in use.

"In this economy, where everybody's cutting corners, if you're somebody who's clipping coupons, you're probably going to save just as much money over a year for all those hours that you clip coupons by unplugging a curling iron or coffeemaker," said Chris Carlson of Lights Out, Green In, a nonprofit that advocates energy conservation. "It doesn't take a lot of time."

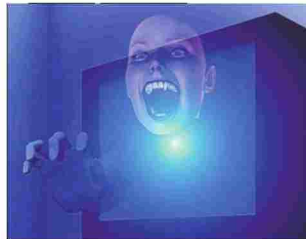
Up to 40 percent of power drawn by vampire electronics is wasted in standby mode. The solution may be simultaneously economical and ecological, says Christina Hansen, a product specialist with cableorganizer.com.

Frugal consumers might want to invest in a Kill a Watt, which tests electronics to see how much power a device uses both on- and off-duty.

Hard-core "vampire slayers" use smart strips — power strips that differentiate between such primary devices as computers and HDTVs, and secondary devices like printers and DVDs. When a smart strip senses that a primary device has been turned

off, it automatically cuts power to all accessory electronics that are connected to it.

"Our smart strips run about \$28," said Hansen. "It's not a huge amount of mon-



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ey, and on a monthly basis, over time, it does add up."

Specific savings vary depending on size of household, but an average family spends "about \$100 a year to power devices on standby mode," National Grid spokesperson Debbie Drew estimates.

"A smart strip is a good investment," she said.

Carlson also recommends saving money by using compact fluorescent light bulbs, which LOGI provides for free to low-income citizens. The bulbs are more expensive than traditional ones, but last longer and use less energy.

"When you're buying groceries on a budget, you say, 'Well, we can buy milk or the expensive light bulb.' We'd all buy the milk," said

Carlson. "But the compact fluorescent is better because you'll save money and it lasts longer, so you'll get more bang for your buck."

The bulbs use 75 percent less energy and last 10 times longer than an incandescent bulb, according to Energy Star. They save \$30 over their lifetime and pay for themselves in six months.

Looking for other ways to lower your energy bills? Pick up some tips at Halloween Town this weekend at the Seaport World Trade Center, where admission to a full-scale Energy Star exhibit house, sponsored by National Grid and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, is free with Halloween Town admission. The house highlights energy efficiency at home.

For more details, go to [Lightsoutgreenin.org](http://Lightsoutgreenin.org), [energy.star.gov/changetheworld](http://energy.star.gov/changetheworld).

***I want to suck your electricity***

Common culprits that use energy even in standby mode:

- Cell phone charger
- DVD/CD player
- Hair dryer
- Curling iron
- Microwave oven
- Electric toothbrush
- Night light
- Television
- Computer
- Computer printer
- Washer/dryer
- Iron

