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Consumer electronics are seldom green

UBA booth at IFA provides info on stand-by losses in consumer electronics

The Federal Environment Agency (UBA) will have a booth at the Consumer Electronics Fair (IFA), held from 29 August to 3 September in Berlin. UBA will provide information about stand-by losses in electronic consumer and entertainment devices and how to limit the losses and save electricity. One four-person household consumes an average 3,600 kilowatt hours per year, of which 440 kilowatt hours are due to stand-by losses alone. 'Stand-by' means when electronic equipment is "off"—supposedly. In other words, it costs 90 euros per year for devices that are not in operation. "The IFA is projecting itself as environmentally aware, for "going green" is in fashion, and it sells well. Yet not everything that looks ecological actually is. It pays to take a closer look when purchasing new goods so as avoid unpleasant surprises when the next electricity bill comes", said Dr. Thomas Holzmann, Vice President of UBA.

Anyone purchasing new electronics equipment should consider how much energy it consumes. At the top of the list are plasma TVs, devouring an average 600 kilowatt hours per year, the amount of energy needed to run 15 coffee machine for a whole year.

Stand-by losses in Germany's households and offices amount to some 22 billion kilowatt hours per year, costing more than four billion euros. Unlike so-called white goods, e.g. refrigerators, washing machines, and dishwashers, consumers pay less attention to how much energy brown goods consume, that is, TVs, stereos, and computers. There is no obligatory labelling about energy consumption on entertainment electronics. A power-saving sticker issued by the Action "No-Energy" identifies equipment that has either no or very low stand-by loss.

Key factors in consumption are not only the technology but also how it is used, as the length of use and number of entertainment devices is on the rise. The UBA therefore recommends paying attention to this power-saving sticker when buying new goods, using multiple outlet strips with an "off" switch, and unplugging power adapters (e.g. for mobile phones) once recharging is complete. Remember to switch equipment off regularly, for about 30-40 percent of power consumption in computers with flat-screen monitors owes to the monitor itself. It already pays to switch the monitor off if it is not in use for more than three minutes.

UBA will be in Hall 7.2 a, Stand 101. Information on how to get to the fair is at http://www1.messe-berlin.de/vip8_1/website/Internet/Internet/www.messe-berlin/deutsch/Anreise_und_Aufenthalt/Anreise/index.html. More information on saving electricity is available in a free brochure (German) titled *Energiesparen im Haushalt [Saving energy in the household]*, which can be downloaded from <http://www.umweltdaten.de/publikationen/fpdf-l/188.pdf>, or ordered by sending an e-mail to: uba@broschürenversand.

Information about stand-by losses is at <http://www.umweltbundesamt.de/uba-info-presse/2008/pd08-054.htm>.

Information on the power-saving sticker is here: <http://www.umweltbundesamt.de/uba-info-presse/2007/pdf/pd07-039.pdf>

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