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Press Relations Officer: Martin Ittershagen
PR-staff: Anke Döpke, Dieter Leutert,
Fotini Mavromati, Theresa Pfeifer, Martin Stallmann
Address: Postfach 1406, 06813 Dessau-Roßlau
Telephone: +49 340/21 03-2122, -2827, -2250, -2318, -3927, -2507
E-Mail: pressestelle@uba.de
Internet: www.umweltbundesamt.de



Bye bye standby: EU Commission declares war on standby losses

Measures adopted to combat energy-inefficient office and household appliances

On July 7, delegates of the EU member states and European Commission (EC) endorsed a proposal for a regulation reducing so-called standby power consumption in household and office products. Once approved by the EU Parliament, the new regulations on electronic devices will take effect as of 2010. The EC Regulation will also be effective in all 27 EU Member States immediately. As a result of the planned measures, a reduction of unnecessary electricity loss amounting to 35 billion kilowatt hours (kWh) per year throughout Europe can be expected by 2020. This volume represents a savings of 14 million tonnes of the ozone-depleting gas carbon dioxide (CO₂), and the equivalent of about 9 large-scale power plants with a 800-megawatt output capacity. Dr. Thomas Holzmann, Vice President of the Federal Environment Agency (UBA), said, "The proposal for an EU regulation to limit standby losses in electrical and electronic equipment is an important step in the right direction. Its adoption will make a real contribution to climate protection efforts."

According to the regulation, there will be a maximum allowed power consumption in standby mode of no more than one watt in computers, washing machines, TVs, and other office and household devices as of the year 2010. If the devices have a display, the maximum may be increased to two watts. The admissible levels will be halved three years later. Holzmann commented that "a longstanding goal of Germany's environmental policy, namely achieving a one-watt level of consumption in standby mode, will thus be achieved and even undercut at a later date".

Standby losses in Germany's private households and offices account for electricity consumption of at least 22 billion kWh per year, incurring annual costs of at least four billion euros. The new EU regulations would result in a reduction in Germany's power consumption of more than six billion kWh per year—roughly four million tonnes of CO₂. The output of a large power plant with an 800-megawatt capacity could be saved, and consumers would also save about 1.2 billion euros in yearly electricity costs.

Whereas the directive only regulates a certain segment of standby losses, there is further potential for savings in computer networks (so-called network standby) as well as in "0 watt off-mode" levels of consumption. Germany and environmental and consumer associations have called upon Brussels to determine that future devices marketed in Europe must be able to be switched off completely. After this objective has been achieved by including it in the preliminary remarks of the directive, the technical feasibility and appropriateness of a 0 watt/hard-off switch requirement should be considered on a product-by-product basis. The UBA has calculated that standby power losses throughout Europe could be reduced by an additional 7 billion kWh, or about 1 billion kWh in Germany.

This directive is the first measure under the Ecodesign of Energy-Using Products Directive (Ecodesign Directive). Other measures for other product groups are scheduled and will follow in the coming months.

Standby losses in offices and households/Savings potential (EU, Germany) Source: Federal Environment Agency, Press Release Nr. 54/2008		
	EU	Germany
Standby losses in offices and households, total (2004)	No information	22 billion kWh
Standby losses affected by the ordinance, 2020, in 'business-as-usual' scenario	49 billion kWh	Roughly 9 billion kWh
Savings potential (in 2020)	35 billion kWh	Over 6 billion kWh
CO ₂ saved	14 million tonnes	Roughly 4 million tonnes

More information on the Energy-Using Products Directive is located at www.umweltbundesamt.de/produkte/oekodesign and www.ebpq.bam.de and <http://www.eup-netzwerk.de>

A brochure (in German) providing information on idling losses, *Energiesparen im Haushalt*, is at <http://www.umweltdaten.de/publikationen/fpdf-l/188.pdf>.

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