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Be the STAR of Holiday Gift Giving

- Looking for the ENERGY STAR® when purchasing electronics will mean a healthier environment and lower utility bills -

MADISON, Wis. (November 18, 2008) –While consumers aren’t wishing for higher utility bills this holiday season, that’s what they might get if electronic items are on their wish lists. Consumer electronic products are responsible for approximately 15 percent of household electricity use – enough to make a real impact on energy bills. If you don’t want to be the bearer of added energy costs this holiday season, Focus on Energy, Wisconsin’s energy efficiency and renewable energy initiative, recommends looking for the ENERGY STAR when purchasing electronics so you can be sure you are getting the most efficient models on the market.

According to Bobbi Fey from Focus on Energy, earning the ENERGY STAR means a product meets strict energy efficiency guidelines set by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of Energy. The ENERGY STAR helps consumers identify products that operate on a fraction of the energy required by their standard-model counterparts. This reduction in energy consumption results in lower utility bills and fewer negative impacts on Wisconsin’s air, water and land.

“ENERGY STAR qualified products have all the same features as non-qualified models; however, they are manufactured to operate more efficiently, meaning they use less energy to perform the same functions,” explained Fey. “In essence, it’s really two gifts in one since the energy savings will be apparent with every use.”

Understanding Electronics

Unbeknownst to many consumers, more than 75 percent of the electricity used by home electronic equipment is consumed when the products are turned off; this is called phantom load. The truth is when products are turned "off," they are really just on standby mode, using electricity to power features like clocks, remote controls and channel/station memory. Turning your TV, stereo, computer and other electronics off when you're not using them is the first step to saving energy. The next step is to upgrade to ENERGY STAR qualified models. They address phantom load by using up to 60 percent less energy than conventional equipment when turned off.

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Here are additional facts about some of the more popular electronic items found in U.S. households:

TVs

- There are about 275 million TVs currently in use in the U.S., consuming over 50 billion kilowatt-hours (kWh) of energy each year — or 4 percent of all households' electricity use. This is enough electricity to power all the homes in the state of New York for an entire year.
- You can find the ENERGY STAR on everything from standard TVs, to HD-ready TVs, to the largest flat-screen plasma TVs.
- When purchasing a new flat panel TV, Focus recommends an LCD model over plasma because they are more energy efficient.
- Starting in November 2008, a new, much more stringent ENERGY STAR specification for TVs went into effect that include requirements for both standby and active modes. TVs that earn the ENERGY STAR label under these requirements will be up to 30 percent more efficient than non-qualified models.

DVD Players

- When they're off, ENERGY STAR qualified DVD products use as little as one-quarter of the energy used by standard models.
- ENERGY STAR qualified DVD players come with all the latest features, including progressive scan.

Cordless Phones

- Cordless phones, answering machines and combination units that have earned the ENERGY STAR perform much more efficiently than conventional units and use about one-third of the energy.
- These products use less energy by incorporating improved energy performance features such as switch-mode power supplies and "smart" chargers.

Making an Energy Efficient Conversion

While the holidays are just around the corner, so is another big date – Feb. 17, 2009 – when all TV stations will begin broadcasting in digital signals instead of analog. For consumers who receive over-the-air TV, non cable or satellite TV subscribers, a DTA converter box or digital TV will be needed in order to watch TV. There are many factors to consider when purchasing a DTA or digital TV, one of which is energy efficiency. Once again, looking for the ENERGY STAR can amount to long-term savings.

DTAs are designed to convert digital TV broadcast signals to analog signals. For people who don't want to buy a new digital TV set or subscribe to cable or satellite TV, DTAs are the only option for receiving television broadcasts. Unfortunately, some estimates indicate the use of DTAs may cost Americans \$270 million per year in higher electricity bills.

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According to Fey, there are several different types of DTAs to choose from, but they are not all created equal – or equally energy efficient. Because of this, consumers should remember there are two price tags when buying electronic equipment, the purchase price and the ongoing operation costs, which can add up over time. ENERGY STAR qualified DTAs will operate using a fraction of the energy compared to DTAs currently available on the global market, saving consumers money on energy bills. If all DTAs met ENERGY STAR specifications, Americans could save 13 billion kWh and more than \$1 billion in energy costs and the reduction in greenhouse gas emissions would be equivalent to those of one million cars.

To learn more about energy efficient electronics or other ways to reduce energy use at home or at work, call Focus on Energy at (800) 762-7077, or visit focusonenergy.com.

About Focus on Energy

Focus on Energy works with eligible Wisconsin residents and businesses to install cost effective energy efficiency and renewable energy projects. Focus information, resources and financial incentives help to implement projects that otherwise would not be completed, or to complete projects sooner than scheduled. Its efforts help Wisconsin residents and businesses manage rising energy costs, promote in-state economic development, protect our environment and control the state's growing demand for electricity and natural gas. For more information call (800) 762-7077 or visit focusonenergy.com.

About ENERGY STAR

ENERGY STAR was introduced by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in 1992 as a voluntary market-based partnership to reduce greenhouse gas emissions through increased energy efficiency. Today, ENERGY STAR offers businesses and consumers energy-efficient solutions to save energy, money and help protect the environment for future generations. More than 12,000 organizations are ENERGY STAR partners committed to improving the energy efficiency of products, homes, buildings and businesses. For more information about ENERGY STAR, visit: www.energystar.gov or call toll-free 1-888-STAR-YES (1-888-782-7937).

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