

New products plug you into electric-bill savings

August 6 2010, By William Hageman

Check your electric bill lately? Did it make you wince? You probably wondered where all those kilowatt-hours went.

According to the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory in California, up to 10 percent of your electric usage can be from appliances and [home electronics](#) that suck up electricity even when off.

A new line of products from Practecol, a St. Louis company launched earlier this year, offers some solutions.

Among the items -- 11 are now on the market, with another 40 on the drawing board -- is a surge protector that stops standby power drainage with the tap of a foot; a remote-control outlet adapter that stops standby power with a flick of a remote switch; and a water displacement bag that goes in a toilet tank and saves nearly a gallon of water per flush.

The idea is simple: save [energy](#), save water, save money.

"What I find in the environmental spaces," says Practecol president Andrew Sharon, "is rarely are the incentives aligned, where doing something good for the planet is aligned with your pocketbook. You can put in [solar panels](#), but that's a pretty tall order. These happen to all be products where the incentives are aligned. People can say, I can do something for the environment and save money? This is a win."

Each item's packaging includes simple instructions and a short

explanation of how energy is saved. In addition, there's an estimate of annual money savings, based on U.S. Department of Energy figures.

"The packaging has to be your salesperson," Sharon says. "And for us, it was really important to come out and lead with our three main messages -- save and sustain simply."

Another interesting aspect: The products can deliver a message to kids.

"I think all of our products have a strong educational component for families," Sharon says. "They've definitely opened up the conversations with (my) 6- and 8-year-old. They are very conscious now where we're wasting electricity, and what those little red lights mean on the TV when it's off, and what we're doing to try and stop that and avoid all those extra wasteful uses of electricity or water."

The Practecol line is available at 350 Target stores around the country, and at target.com. For more information on the products, visit practecol.com, [facebook.com/practecol](https://www.facebook.com/practecol) or twitter.com/practecol.

Here are some of the highlights of the line of Practecol products:

Refrigerator energy-saving kit (\$19.99): It's easy to adjust the temperature of your fridge. But what's the difference between 5 and a 6? This kit includes a temperature monitor that will display the temp -- the ideal is between 34 and 37 degrees -- as well as a door alarm that goes off if the door is left open for more than 45 seconds. Estimated annual savings: \$34.

Motion-activated light socket (\$14.99): For those who leave a room with the lights on this converts light sockets into motion sensor lights. Screw it into a socket, put in a bulb and you're set. The estimated saving is \$7 per light.

Energy monitor consumption reader (\$19.99): Plug it into a wall socket, then plug an appliance into it and the meter will tell you the kilowatt consumption and cost. Using the information can help save up to \$40 a year.

Dryer balls (\$4.99 for a package of two): They look like dog toys, but the heavy plastic balls go in a clothes dryer, bounce around with your clothes and keep items separated. That allows for a faster drying time and savings of up to \$20 a year.

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