

It's lurking there, in the hot darkness, sucking up power, stealing your money. Beware the ...

Cold, hard facts

A refrigerator in a **90-degree garage** uses 45-50 percent more energy than one in a **70-degree home**.

Old refrigerators and freezers put a **great strain** on local power grids, especially during **peak hours**.

National **efficiency standards** effective Sept. 15, 2014, reduced the energy use of most new refrigerators and freezers by about **20-25 percent**.

An estimated **170 million refrigerators** and refrigerator-freezers are in use in the United States.

More than **60 million** refrigerators are more than **10 years old**, costing consumers \$4.7 billion a year in energy costs.

Keep your refrigerator temperature between **36 and 38 degrees Fahrenheit**, and freezers between 0 and 5 degrees Fahrenheit.

During a power outage, refrigerated food should be safe as long as the power was not out for more than **four hours** and the refrigerator door was kept shut.

Cover liquids and **wrap foods** to store in the refrigerator so they won't release moisture, making the **compressor** work harder.

If properly recycled, only about 55 pounds of a typical refrigerator ends up in a **landfill**.

On average, a refrigerator uses nearly 14 percent of a home's energy, **second only to the air conditioner**, which uses 16 percent.

Clean condenser coils several times a year, which could cut the refrigerator energy use by 15 percent.

Opening the fridge too often or **leaving the door open** too long can cause your unit to use an extra 50-120 kilowatts each year.

Watch an **animated video** showing how a refrigerator gets recycled at **1.usa.gov/1GRjn0s**

Garage Fridge

By Denise Gamino

If you're like 41 percent of Americans, you have a second refrigerator in the garage or workshop, put there when you bought a new model for the kitchen. It's convenient for storing extra beverages and hunting bounty, but is it worth the cost to your wallet and the environment? Consumer and energy experts agree: It's time to turn that energy drain into a money gain.

A leftover fridge for leftovers could be costing you hundreds of dollars a year.

Second-string refrigerators cooling their meals in the garage usually are old and less energy efficient than newer models. If the garage is not insulated, the fridge requires much more energy to run in hot months and may not function properly in 40-degree or colder weather. In addition, a B-team fridge that is mostly empty uses extra energy.

Not ready for the ultimate fridge purge? Then keep it filled, even with bottled water so it cools more efficiently; clean condenser coils several times a year; open doors quickly and infrequently; and unplug when you don't need it.

It's easy to find out how much you'd save by getting rid of the "beer and deer" fridge/freezer. Check the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's online "Refrigerator Retirement Savings Calculator" online at 1.usa.gov/OiSQVV.

Proper disposal is important. Call your municipal public works department, refuse collector or a local scrap metal dealer. Many places may first require the refrigerant to be recovered, which could require hiring a technician with certified recovery equipment.

Keep the fridge magnets for the memories.

Joe Stafford photo illustration

On average, a **15-year-old refrigerator** uses more than twice as much energy as a new ENERGY STAR refrigerator.

Properly **recycling** an old refrigerator can prevent as much as **5,500-20,000 pounds** of greenhouse gas emissions over the next five years.

A fridge that is **10 degrees colder** than necessary can eat up 25 percent more energy.

A **top-freezer** refrigerator uses 10-25 percent less electricity than a side-by-side model and less energy than bottom-mounted freezers.

A **20-year-old** refrigerator or freezer can use two to four times more energy annually than a new model.

Automatic ice-makers and through-the-door water dispensers increase energy use by 14-20 percent and add \$75-\$250 to the purchase price.

A woman in Henderson, Nev., reportedly has 35,000 nonduplicated **fridge magnets** that she has been collecting since the 1970s. She told a Las Vegas newspaper that after she dies, she wants to be buried in her refrigerator covered in thousands of magnets, according to the book "Nevada Curiosities."

A refrigerator magnet will work in **outer space**, according to NASA.

Refrigerator size is **growing ever larger**, and some new models have a so-called door-in-door feature that provides a small compartment so you can reach often-used items such as beverages without opening the fridge's main chamber.

—Denise Gamino

Sources: American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy, Appliance Standards Awareness Project, Association of Home Appliance Manufacturers, California Energy Commission, Consumer Reports, Cornell University, General Electric, Green Living Ideas, Public Utility Commission of Texas, U.S. Department of Energy, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and U.S. Food and Drug Administration.