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Attention CES: California Mandates Energy-Efficient Battery Chargers

As the great gadget orgy known as the Consumer Electronics Show wraps up in Las Vegas, California regulators on Thursday approved the nation's first energy efficiency standards for all the battery chargers sure to proliferate when those new gizmos come to market.

The new standards, which take first effect Feb. 1, 2013, will save Californians an estimated \$306 million in annual electricity costs as well as enough power to keep the lights on in 350,000 homes, according to the California Energy Commission

Californians own some 170 million chargers – an average of 11 per household – to power everything from iPhones and iPads to electric razors and toothbrushes, regulators say.

“When you consider powering California’s plugged-in lifestyle, these new efficiency standards will save consumers money and energy,” Robert Weisenmiller, chairman of the California Energy Commission, said in a statement. “The standards will reduce the wasted electricity from powering our day-to-day appliances by 40% and help California meet its strategic climate policy goals. Once again, California is setting the standard for energy efficiency, keeping the state’s dominance as the most energy efficient state per capita.”

The new standards also apply to industrial chargers used to power the batteries of golf carts, forklifts and other heavy-duty equipment and go into effect Jan. 1, 2014. Small commercial chargers used for walkie-talkies, barcode scanners and the like must meet energy efficiency standards by Jan. 1, 2017.

In another green move in the Golden State, the California Public Utilities Commission on Thursday issued an order clarifying that utilities can only obtain electricity from new fossil fuel power plants after they’ve taken measures to cut consumption through energy efficiency and conservation efforts and then met demand by buying power from renewable sources such as solar, wind and geothermal. The policy applies to California’s big three investor-owned utilities – Pacific Gas & Electric, Southern California Edison and San Diego Gas & Electric.

The regulators on Thursday also approved nearly 1,100 megawatts of utility contracts to purchase electricity from solar power stations and wind farms. And in a sign of solar’s increasing competitiveness with fossil fuels – at least in California – those contracts included photovoltaic farms to be built by SunPower that will generate 700 megawatts of electricity below the cost of natural gas-fired power plants.

Read more here: <http://www.forbes.com/sites/toddwoody/2012/01/13/attention-ces-california-mandates-energy-efficient-battery-chargers/>