

Tech Companies Set Goals for Energy Efficiency

Climate Savers has defined a series of standards for power supply efficiency in servers and PCs that it suggests members adopt between now and July 2010

By Nancy Gohring

June 12, 2007 (IDG News Service) A group of some of the biggest technology companies said they've committed to a plan to improve the power efficiency of equipment they make and use.

The Climate Savers Computing Initiative, which includes companies such as Google Inc., Microsoft Corp., Intel Corp., Hewlett-Packard Co., Dell Inc. and Sun Microsystems Inc., aims to improve the efficiency of power sources for computers and servers and encourage end users to take advantage of underused power management techniques.

Only about 50 percent of the power that leaves a power outlet reaches a PC, because inefficient power cords leak energy, Google's Senior Vice President of Operations, Urs Holzle said Tuesday during a press conference to announce the program.

Climate Savers has defined a series of standards for power supply efficiency in servers and PCs that it suggests members adopt between now and July 2010. By 2010, the Climate Savers standard will define a power supply that is above 95 percent efficient, Holzle said.

The program asks manufacturing members to build products to the standard and companies to pledge to buy products that have the improved power supplies.

The improvement doesn't require the development of new technologies. "This is all doable today with technology we have and know," Holzle said.

The reason that vendors haven't deployed such efficient power cords is because they cost more, said Pat Gelsinger, senior vice president and general manager of Intel's digital enterprise group. A PC with a more efficient power cord would cost around US\$20 more and a server an additional \$30, he said.

To address that price premium, Climate Savers is encouraging energy companies to issue rebates to users that buy products with the more efficient power supplies. Over time that cost premium is expected to drop with volume production, Gelsinger said. In addition, end users will save on their energy bills, also helping to offset the cost, he noted.

Another component of Climate Savers is general education and encouragement for end users to take advantage of power management mechanisms that are typically built into existing PCs. "Ninety percent of PCs are capable but aren't utilizing power management techniques," Gelsinger said.

"We want to drive IT policy in enterprises," he said.

Improving power supply efficiencies and the use of power management techniques along the timeline Climate Savers has described would reduce global carbon emissions from the operation of computers by 54 million tons per year. It would save 62 billion kilowatt hours of energy in 2010, worth around \$5.5 billion in energy costs, the group said.

In its own data centers, most of Google's servers already have power supplies that comply with the Climate Savers standards for 2008 and 2009, Holzle said. Google began investing in the more expensive supplies because "it's worth spending a bit more on the power supply to save on the energy bill," he said.

He defended Google's overall carbon footprint, despite questions about company jets that are hard on the environment. He pointed to the solar power used at the company's headquarters and incentives for employees to buy hybrid cars. In addition, he hinted at future energy-saving programs that the company plans to announce soon. Although Holzle said he knows Google's carbon footprint, he declined to share it.

Other companies that are already part of the program include Yahoo Inc., Hitachi Ltd., eBay Inc., Advanced Micro Devices Inc., NEC Corp., Red Hat Inc., Lenovo Group Ltd., Unisys Corp. and the Linux Foundation.

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