

Reduce Your Carbon Emissions

Saving energy is easier than you think!

The average American generates about 19-20 tons of carbon dioxide each year. Simple activities such as watching television, sending an email message, cooking and making a phone call produce carbon emissions, but there are many simple and inexpensive ways to reduce your carbon emissions (and your energy costs) beginning today.

According to Evan Mills, a scientist at Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, residential energy use generates approximately 21% of total U.S. greenhouse-gas emissions and transportation represents 33%. This means that you and I, through everyday decisions, impact more than 50% of US greenhouse gas emissions.

Simple but Important Ways to Reduce Carbon Emissions

There are many ways to reduce carbon emissions but those listed below will have a great impact. And you don't have to do them all at once.

Driving and Transportation

- Follow manufacturer recommendations for proper tire inflation, oil change frequency and keeping your car tuned. Doing so will contribute significantly to improving fuel mileage and reducing carbon emissions.
- Slowing down helps. "Driving 65 miles per hour versus 75 miles per hour can save you up to 1,500 pounds of carbon dioxide per year, even more if you drive an SUV," said Urvashi Rangan, a senior scientist and policy analyst with Consumer Reports. Such a speed reduction improves gas mileage by 15% and the savings go directly to your wallet.
- Hybrids may not be the answer for everyone. Fuel efficient vehicles in every category can be found in the marketplace today. Choose your car with energy efficiency in mind. By doing so, you can reduce your energy consumption, save money and reduce our reliance on imported oil.
- Consider biking and even walking for local trips. When you must drive, plan ahead to minimize your trips. Park centrally to reduce how often you turn the ignition on and off. Investigate carpool and ride-share possibilities.

Home Energy Efficiency

- Implementing the recommendations of a home-energy audit can improve your home's energy efficiency by as much as 25%. Contact your local utility company and ask about an audit. Alternatively, you can consider a 'do-it yourself' home audit by using the tools found at the Home Energy Saver Web site, <http://hes.lbl.gov/>
- Typical energy efficiency candidates include heating/air conditioning, hot water heater, window and door sealing, insulation, fireplace and chimney, lighting, programmable thermostats, and laundry and kitchen appliances. CFLs have become mainstream. Incandescent has become a "dirty word".

Eating “Green”

Growing and transporting food accounts for an estimated 17% of the total energy consumption of the US. Foods produced locally simply don't require sophisticated, expensive transportation systems to get to the table. And if chosen with reasonable care, locally produced food is fresher and tastes better. Farmers' Markets are an excellent source of locally produced food.

Unplug

5% of US electricity is consumed by electronics products that are turned off, according to the Alliance to Save Energy, a Washington, D.C.-based coalition of business and government leaders. At the end of the day, and especially when taking a trip, unplug your appliances including televisions and stereos. Use a power strip, enabling you to plug/unplug a series of devices with a single touch.

Technology

Consider a laptop next time you upgrade your PC. Laptops use considerably less energy than desktops. If you use a desktop, use a flat-panel display which uses much less energy than a CRT. Use remanufactured ink and toner cartridges, think twice about printing, use recycled paper products.

Water

The usual suspects-install low-flow toilets, faucet aerators, showerheads, take showers not baths. Turn off the water while brushing teeth or shaving. Install a drip irrigation system and consider cheaper, drought resistant alternatives to lawns. Turf grass is a water guzzler.

Reduce, Re-use, Recycle, Minimize

Separate your trash and recycle. Buy local- transporting product is expensive and contributes to greenhouse gas emissions. Avoid products with unnecessary packaging. When you can't avoid, re-use or recycle. Use cloth shopping bags.