

1. WALK, BIKE, OR CARPOOL

Why?

In the US, 40% of all trips are two miles or less; 90% of those trips are taken by car. If one out of 10 people switched to an alternative form of transportation, CO2 emissions would drop by 25.4 million tons per year.

How?

If you are going a distance less than 1 mile, walk instead of driving. Going further? Ride your bike. Both save gas and parking costs while improving health and reducing risks of obesity. Or if the distance is too far to bike, carpool or consider mass transit. Make sure to lobby your local government to increase spending on sidewalks and bike lanes, because these improvements can pay huge dividends in bettering health and reducing traffic with very little cost.

If you must drive alone, be sure to combine trips, completing as many errands in one trip as possible

Want more info?

Visit www.2milechallenge.com

2. GET AN ENERGY AUDIT

Why?

In the US, 21% of the all energy used is consumed in homes. Over 40% of home energy use goes to heating and cooling; water heating and lighting uses around 20%; and appliances including refrigeration use more than 15%. A home energy audit is the first step to assess how much energy your home consumes and to evaluate what measures you can take to make your home more energy efficient.

How?

You can perform a simple energy audit yourself. With a simple walk-through you can spot many types of problems in any building. Remember to make a check-list of inspected areas and problems you found. The US Department of Energy has a lot of information on “Do-It-Yourself Home Energy Assessments,” including ideas for locating air-leaks, perfecting insulation, inspecting heating and cooling equipment, and examining the lighting throughout your home or office.

You can also hire a professional energy auditor carry out a more thorough audit. A professional auditor uses a variety of techniques and equipment to determine the energy efficiency of a structure. Thorough assessments often use equipment such as blower doors, which measure the extent of leaks in the building envelope, and infrared cameras, which reveal hard-to-detect areas of air infiltration and missing insulation.

Want more info?

Visit energysavers.gov

3. WEATHERIZE YOUR HOME OR OFFICE

Why?

For every \$1 spent on weatherization, \$1.80 is saved over time. Weatherization can reduce energy bills by 32%; weatherized households save an average of \$218 per year on their energy bills.

How?

Weatherization is achieved by modifying a building to reduce energy consumption: a tight, well-insulated house saves energy, allows for smaller capacity cooling and heating systems, and provides a comfortable environment with smaller temperature swings. Weatherizing home improvements will last for many years and will lower energy bills in all seasons.

No-cost weatherization projects include opening blinds, shades and curtains on sunny winter days; closing blinds, shades, and curtains on cold days to trap heat or on hot days to keep cool; removing window unit air conditioners in the winter to eliminate air leakage; and making sure that your fireplace has a tight-fitting damper.

Low-cost and easy projects include sealing holes around outlets with inexpensive outlet gaskets, weather-stripping doors and caulking windows, blanketing your hot water heater, and insulating hot water pipes.

Other projects include insulating and properly sealing heating ducts, sealing air leaks around doors, windows, chimneys, and electrical outlets, adding more ceiling and wall insulation and upgrading to energy efficient units.

Want more info?

Visit the PEA website! (peanc.org)

4. BUY ENERGY EFFICIENT APPLIANCES

Why?

Making your home more energy efficient can help reduce energy bills and improve comfort.

How?

The State of North Carolina will implement a two-phase rebate program to help residents replace older, inefficient appliances with ENERGY STAR™ qualified appliances. The first phase of the program, scheduled April 22-25, 2010, will be a limited-time, instant rebate for refrigerators, freezers, clothes washers, and dishwashers. A Phase 2 mail-in rebate for several types of water heaters, as well as gas furnaces, and central air conditioners is tentatively scheduled to begin in June 2010 and will continue until remaining funds are depleted.

Eligible products include: Refrigerators, freezers, clothes washers, dishwashers, gas storage, water heaters, electric heat pump water heaters, solar water heaters, gas furnaces, and central air conditioners.

Please contact: North Carolina Department of Administration, State Energy Office; total funding: \$8,849,000

Want more info?

Visit energystar.gov

5. POWER DOWN AND UNPLUG ELECTRONICS

Why?

Many appliances and home electronics continue to draw a small amount of power when they are switched off. In the average home, 75% of the electricity used to power home electronics and appliances is consumed while the products are turned off. Unplug electronics and save up to 25% on your home energy bill.

How?

Easy: unplug electronics when you are finished using them. Some of the most problematic energy drainers while “off”: cable boxes, sound systems, VCRs, DVD players, DVRs, computers, printers, and televisions. Cell phone and PDA chargers also pull a “phantom load” when left plugged in. When your charge is complete, unplug them.

Plug an appliance (or many) into a power strip, and then when you are done, just flip the switch to cut off power. Gadgets, like the SmartStrip, help by cutting the power to all electronics when one is turned off.

Want more info?

Visit energy.gov

6. BUY LOCAL

Why?

In addition to the reduced transportation footprint of local economic activity, buying local has a strong multiplier effect in the economy. A dollar spent on local products and services can circulate in the community up to 15 times; a 10% change in purchasing from national chain stores to locally owned businesses each year would create 1,300 new jobs and yield nearly \$200 million in incremental economic activity.

How?

Food isn't the only thing you can get locally, so think before you buy. You might be able to find new or gently used products in our area instead of shipping furniture, appliances, or other items across the country (wasting money and energy). Check out garage sales, thrift stores, and consignment shops for clothing and other everyday items.

Donate local too. You can donate used cell phones and chargers, furniture clothing and cleaning and school supplies to local agencies to keep the products in the area.

Want more info?

Visit www.livingeconomies.org and www.newdream.org/buyingwisely

7. INVEST IN DURABLE, REUSABLE PRODUCTS

Why?

Let's take just one example – disposable water bottles. The manufacturing of bottles to meet the American demand for bottled water requires more than 1.5 million barrels of oil each year, enough to fuel 100,000 cars for that year. Each year over 500 billion disposable bags are consumed worldwide (1 million every minute). Decreasing the number of disposable products in your life decreases the carbon footprint of manufacturing, transportation, and disposal.

How?

Invest up front in durable, reusable bags, bottles, towels, mops, pots and pans, and anything else you need. Over the life of the products, you will save money, reduce waste, and reduce the energy intensive extraction of virgin resources.

Instead of buying pricey bottled water, use a water filter to purify tap water and a reusable bottle. Bottled water generates a large amount of container waste. In addition, disposable water bottles are usually marketed in plastic bottles made from polyethylene terephthalate (PET) resin and making bottles from PET means releasing significant amounts of air pollutants (1 kilogram of PET causes the release of 40 grams of hydrocarbons, 25 grams of sulfur oxides, 18 grams of carbon monoxide, 20 grams of nitrogen oxides, and 2.3 kilograms of carbon dioxide.) And while bottles made from PET are recyclable, of the 14 billion water bottles sold in the United States each year, 90% wind up in the trash.

BYOB: Bring your own bag! Plastic bags do not biodegrade, they photodegrade (break down into smaller toxic bits which contaminate soil, waterways, and the food chain). Hundreds of thousands of marine animals die every year from eating discarded plastic bags.

Remember that even though paper towels are commonplace, they are not the only solution to a mess. Products made of cotton or linen can be washed and reused many times over. In some cases sponges, which offer a longer product lifetime, can easily handle the work you may normally relegate to a paper towel.

Want more info?

Visit <http://www.newdream.org/water/>

8. EAT LOCAL AND IN SEASON!

Why?

The average meal travels anywhere between 1,200 to 2,500 miles from field or pasture to plate. A basic diet of imported ingredients can require up to four times the energy of an equivalent locally-sourced diet.

Buying local food not only helps local farmers thrive, it also reduces energy consumption. Food transportation is among the biggest and fastest-growing sources of greenhouse gas emissions worldwide. A lot of energy is expended freezing, refrigerating, and trucking the food around. Eating locally grown food means less fossil fuel burned and local food is often safer too (even when it is not certified as organically grown).

How?

Make sure to pay attention to grocery store labels to find out where fruits, vegetables, meat, fishes, and other fresh food comes from. Or you can visit your local farmers' market or co-op. In addition, locally owned coffee shops and restaurants often support other local suppliers more than the larger chains. Don't be shy, ask where your food comes from.

Remember that small, local farms are not likely externalizing the costs of growing your food onto the environment or onto laborers. Don't be surprised to find yourself paying closer to the true cost of growing and distributing the food.

Want more info?

Visit <http://www.localharvest.org/>

9. PLANT A GARDEN or SUPPORT A COMMUNITY GARDEN

Why?

Research suggests that the conversion of 10,000 small- to medium-sized farms to organic production practices would store carbon in the soil equivalent to taking 1,174,400 cars off the road. And planting and maintaining a garden reconnects us with the true value of food.

How?

It is really not as complicated as it may seem. If you have access to a deck, a roof, a patch of ground no larger than a flower bed or far more space, you can grow your own food. Start small in a spot that gets sun all year and cover the area with organic material like leaves or dried grass. Pick out your favorite vegetables and plant them! Make sure to keep your soil damp though. You can even make your own compost pile from table scraps and other garden waste, in the corner of your garden. If you don't have room for a compost bin, just heap up all the clean organic material you can get and mix it up occasionally. Then apply the compost periodically to the soil around your plants.

Want more info?

Visit plantingjustice.org

10. CONSERVE WATER!

Why?

Americans use 26 billion gallons of water each day. Up to 30% of a household energy footprint can come from moving water from its source to the home. A faucet that is dripping just one drip per second will waste about four gallons of water in just one day or 1,400 gallons in a year. The average household could conserve water by 34% per year by installing water-efficient fixtures and appliances and save about \$170 per year.

How?

Fix leaks as soon as you detect them. You can install low-flush toilets and showerheads and faucet aerators. A quick fix is to use toilet-displacement devices (a simple bag filled with rocks will suffice).

If you don't want to modify existing plumbing, there are many easy behavioral changes you can make. In your kitchen, only run the dishwasher when it is full or if you wash dishes by hand, fill a bucket or the sink first instead of letting the water run continuously. Turn off the faucet when brushing your teeth or shaving, take shorter showers, and use toilets only to carry away sanitary waste. And only run the laundry machine with a full load.

Remember that landscaping alone accounts for 20-30% of all residential water use- so cut down on sprinkler use. Also try to water your lawn early in the morning or late in the evening to reduce evaporation. Allowing the grass to grow slightly taller will reduce water loss by providing more ground shade. Growing native plants can save more than 50% of the water normally used to care for outdoor plants.

Want more info?

Visit epa.gov