

Go Green

Study after study has confirmed that global warming is already occurring and that it is caused primarily by human activities. The only uncertainties are how soon and in what ways it will disrupt our existence. Stronger storms? Flooded coastlines? Harsher droughts? More disease? Not to mention that our waterways, food, and air are already polluted to unsound levels in many areas, affecting our health and quality of life every day.

Below we offer a list of things you can do today that will not only reduce your **ecological footprint**, but also save you money and help you live a happier, healthier life.

- ◆ **Recycling** mail, catalogs, etc. will reduce the amount of fiber that must be obtained from wood to make new paper products, decrease landfill waste and reduce greenhouse gas emissions from incinerator and landfill. You can also donate old cell phone, PDA or pagers to worthwhile organizations.
 - ◆ When you receive unwanted catalogs, newsletters, magazines, or junk mail, request to be removed from the mailing list before you recycle the item.
- ◆ **Get an energy audit** –
 - ◆ Install additional insulation, replacement windows and doors or energy efficient heating & cooling systems to reduce energy costs.
- ◆ **Reduce energy use** –
 - ◆ Purchasing Energy Star lighting which provides bright warm light, but uses about 75% less energy than standard bulbs. (Lowe's has energy efficient bulbs for recessed lights with dimmers available).
 - ◆ Make it a habit to turn off the lights when you're leaving any room for 15 minutes or more and utilize natural light when you can.
 - ◆ Make it a policy to buy Energy Star-rated light bulbs and fixtures, which use at least two-thirds less energy than regular lighting, and install timers or motion sensors that automatically shut off lights when they're not needed.
 - ◆ **Change the thermostat setting and install energy saving devices** - Setting your thermostat a few degrees lower in the winter and a few degrees higher in the summer can translate to substantial savings on your utility bills.
 - ◆ Install low-flow showerheads and take shorter showers to save water and the energy used to heat it. Or, consider eventually installing a solar hot water heater on your property.
 - ◆ Wash clothes in cold water whenever possible and use a drying rack or clothesline.
 - ◆ When incandescent bulbs burn out, replace them with longer-lasting, low-energy compact fluorescent bulbs.
 - ◆ With the money you save from making these changes, consider buying wind energy from your local utility or purchasing renewable energy offsets. Renewables offer our best hope for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, as well as a host of other pollutants. In some cases, "green energy" options can be cheaper than electricity from conventional sources!
 - ◆ Replace old refrigerators, washing machines, dryers and dishwashers with energy star model. Front load washing machines use less energy and water conservation savings
 - ◆ Unplug little used extra refrigerators – a savings of approx. \$25.00 per month.
- ◆ Use **organic fertilizers & pesticides** on lawns & gardens – toxins penetrate the earth and pollute our water supply.
- ◆ **Re-route your commute.**
 - ◆ Walk or bike to work and save money on gas and parking while improving your cardiovascular health and reducing your risk of obesity.
 - ◆ If you live far from your office, investigate the option of telecommuting or carpooling.
 - ◆ If your streets are not conducive to biking or walking, lobby your municipal government to increase spending on sidewalks and bike lanes. With little cost, these improvements can pay huge dividends in decreased traffic and pollution.
- ◆ **Buy local.**
 - ◆ Shop at your local farmers' market. Though the offerings can be more expensive, you can generally count on a higher quality product—and the entire purchase price goes directly to the farmer. Buying any goods produced locally saves energy by reducing the fossil fuels needed to transport food and other items across the country and around the globe.
 - ◆ Start a local currency program in your town. This can ensure that money stay in your local economy, valuing local services and supporting local merchants.
- ◆ **Compost your food scraps.**

- ◆ Composting helps reduce the amount of waste you send to the landfill, which can save you money if you live in a municipality with a “pay as you throw” system. In the process, you create free, healthy fertilizer for your garden (or your neighbor’s—or lobby for a community garden!)
- ◆ If you don’t have a yard or space for a compost pile, try indoor ‘vermiculture,’ or worm composting.
- ◆ **Skip the bottled water at the grocery or convenience store.**
 - ◆ Filter your tap water for drinking rather than using bottled water. Not only is bottled water expensive, but it produces large amounts of container waste.
 - ◆ Check out this recent update and life cycle analysis for the latest on bottled water trends.
- ◆ **Make your own cleaning supplies.**
 - ◆ Using simple ingredients such as baking soda, soap, and vinegar, you can make cheap, easy, and non-toxic cleaning products that really work! Save money, time, and your indoor air quality.
- ◆ **Think twice about new electronics.**
 - ◆ E-waste from discarded cell phones and computers is a growing environmental problem. Mounds of electronic refuse are being shipped abroad illegally for ‘disassembly’ by workers with little protection against the mercury and other toxic substances they contain.
 - ◆ Keep your electronics as long as possible and dispose of them responsibly when the time comes.
 - ◆ Buy higher-quality items and don’t give in to ‘psychological obsolescence’ marketing campaigns.
 - ◆ Recycle your cell phone and support good causes at the same time!
 - ◆ Ask your local government to set up a responsible recycling and hazardous waste collection event.
- ◆ **Add one meatless meal per week.**
 - ◆ While strict vegetarianism isn’t for everyone, even the most devout carnivores can cut back on meat consumption without cramping their style—and save money in the process. Industrial meat production requires huge energy inputs and creates noxious waste problems. The proliferation of factory farms is damaging the environment, and the global nature of the industry creates conditions that promote the spread of diseases such as avian flu, potentially costing society billions.
- ◆ **Maximize computer efficiency**
 - ◆ Computers in the business sector unnecessarily waste \$1 billion worth of electricity a year.
 - ◆ Make it a habit to turn off your computer—and the power strip it's plugged into—when you leave for the day. Otherwise, you're still burning energy even if you're not burning the midnight oil. (Check with your IT department to make sure the computer doesn't need to be on to run backups or other maintenance.) During the day, setting your computer to go to sleep automatically during short breaks can cut energy use by 70 percent. Remember that screen savers *don't* save energy.
 - ◆ Make it a policy to invest in energy-saving computers, monitors, and printers and make sure that old equipment is properly recycled. Look for a recycler that has pledged not to export hazardous e-waste and to follow other safety guidelines. Old computers that still work, and are less than five years old, can be donated to organizations that will refurbish them and find them new homes. (You may even get a tax deduction.)
- ◆ **Print smarter**
 - ◆ The average U.S. office worker goes through 10,000 sheets of copy paper a year.
 - ◆ Make it a habit to print on both sides or use the backside of old documents for faxes, scrap paper, or drafts. Avoid color printing and print in draft mode whenever feasible.
 - ◆ Make it a policy to buy chlorine-free paper with a higher percentage of post-consumer recycled content. Also consider switching to a lighter stock of paper or alternatives made from bamboo, hemp, organic cotton, or kenaf. Recycle toner and ink cartridges and buy remanufactured ones. According to Office Depot, each remanufactured toner cartridge "keeps approximately 2.5 pounds of metal and plastic out of landfills...and conserves about a half gallon of oil."

Community involvement is essential both for good ideas and for energy reduction.

We can make a difference.

Let’s work together to make Watchung, a suburban community that can make changes need to fight Global Warming.

Excerpts from Worldwatch Institute and Sierra Club.

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