

Sustainability Tips

Environmental responsibility is everyone's responsibility. By doing your part, over 300 million Americans become environmental stewards, making environmentally protective choices!

Tips to save energy and use water efficiently

Use public transportation, carpool, walk, or bike whenever possible to reduce air pollution and save on fuel costs.

Buy or switch to energy-efficient EnergyStar lighting fixtures and bulbs. Replace incandescent bulbs with compact fluorescent bulbs wherever possible! They use only a fraction of the electricity and are rated for three or more times the life of incandescent bulbs.

As you start your spring cleaning, do a home energy audit and switch to EnergyStar products. Heat pumps with a high SEER rating offer one of the most efficient forms of heating and cooling the home. Look for the EnergyStar label when replacing bulbs, fixtures, and appliances to help save you money on energy bills and pollute less.

Run your dishwasher only when it's full; use the rinse-and-hold dishwasher feature until you're ready to run a full load. Turn off the dishwasher's drying cycle and let the dishes air dry. Hint: If you do this while the dishes are still warm they will dry very quickly and use no energy doing so!

Buy water-efficient fixtures and products. The WaterSense label helps shoppers identify water-efficient products and programs. Replace the head on older faucets with a water-restricting head for an inexpensive water-saving fix!

A full bath tub requires from 30- 70 gallons of water, while taking a five-minute shower saves water by using only 10 to 25 gallons. Make sure your shower head is one of the water-efficient models and you may save even more!

Have the thermostat on your water heater reduced to no more than 120 degrees. If it's set for higher, you're probably wasting energy!

Leaky faucets and toilets can waste thousands of gallons of water each year and represent money down the drain (pun intended!). Repair or replace old or damaged fixtures. Pour a little food dye in the rear tank on your toilet, if the dye shows up in the toilet bowl after a few minutes, then the toilet water is leaking down the sewer. An inexpensive tank valve is the fix.

The average washing machine uses 40.9 gallons of water per load. Buy a high-efficiency washer or save up for full loads. A high-efficiency washing machine not only uses less water but also spins at higher speeds, removing more water from the clothes. The more water removed the less energy the dryer uses to dry the clothes! Even better, install a clothes line and let the sun dry your clothes!

Get one of the new digital thermostats for your home's heating and cooling system. They have a setback feature that will save money!

Check into the new solar systems. Did you know North Carolina gives tax credits for some solar systems? The NC Solar Center offers free information and services:

- **Design Review Services**
Design reviews are available for individuals and businesses through the North Carolina Solar Center, to evaluate and suggest cost effective improvements to increase the energy efficiency and show how solar technologies can be incorporated into new buildings in the design stage.
- **Energy Efficient Mortgages**
The State Energy Office has joined with Residential Services Network (RESNET) and Fannie Mae to promote Fannie Mae's new energy efficient mortgages program. Through this program, prospective homeowners can finance energy efficient systems through the home mortgage. Several key lenders, including Wachovia and Countrywide, have actively joined the program.
- **NC HealthyBuilt Homes**
A green builder program has been launched in North Carolina for small to medium size homebuilders that may not have the resources to compete in the rapidly emerging field of green building. Builders can currently receive technical assistance, design reviews, workshops, and consultation from the North Carolina Solar Center to increase their knowledge of green building principles.

- NC Solar Center <http://www.ncsc.ncsu.edu> 1-800-33NCSUN e-mail: NCSUN@NCSU.EDU

Tips to Reduce / Reuse / Recycle

Allow grass clippings to stay on the lawn, instead of bagging them. The cut grass will decompose and return to the soil naturally.

Take your old computer, DVD player, or other electronics to a recycling center. This helps keep hazardous substances out of the landfill.

Proper maintenance reduces waste. Keep appliances in good working order. Follow manufacturers' suggestions for proper operation and maintenance

Take reusable bags on shopping trips. Keep them in your car or near your door to remember. You can also reuse paper or plastic shopping bags.

Don't fertilize before a rain storm. Your fertilizer - along with your money - washes down storm drains and can pollute rivers and streams.

When properly composted, kitchen wastes can become natural soil additives for lawns, gardens, and even house plants. Start a compost area in your yard for kitchen wastes, leaves, yard clippings, etc.

When you travel, stay at hotels that use less water or energy. Before you go, unplug your VCR or other electronics that use electricity even when "off."

Leaving your car at home twice a week can cut greenhouse gas emissions over 1,500 pounds per year.