

Going a Little Green

It is not surprising that the more we love our home electronics, computers and gadgets the more energy we need to consume. Just look in every room, we have computers, cordless phones, TVs, radios, appliances, fans, air conditioners, DVD, VCRs, and printers. Did I mention the numerous power strips recharging all those wireless devices? We just have to look at our monthly energy bill to see the upward trend.

Energy is created from the natural resources in our environment. However, we know that that our environment is becoming fragile, warming up and those natural resources are at risk of running out someday. So what can we do to help be less of a “consumer” and still enjoy our electronics? We can go a little green and help protect the environment. If we all help, it will make a difference plus put a smile on our face when you see a lower energy bill. Here are some easy changes to start with.

When Not in Use, Turn off the Juice

This is the easiest energy conservation step for most of us. Turn off your computer and its peripherals plus any other unnecessary electronics like DVDs and VCRs when they are not in use. Your computer equipment uses lots of energy when left on overnight, even in "standby" mode. It is commonly thought that a computer's life is shortened by turning it on and off. However, desktop computers are designed to protect their internal circuitry from damage due to on/off switching. Turning a PC, modem and printer off at night or a few times a day will not affect its useful life. Modern hard drives are designed to operate reliably for thousands of on/off cycles. I realize that it is inconvenient to wait a minute or two for your computer to boot up but this is trivial compared to the energy savings by keeping computer equipment off when not in use.

Save a Tree – Reduce and Recycle Paper

If you have a reliable method of backing up your files then you do not have to use any paper for printing out documents for filing. If you do have to print something out, use recycled paper. You can get good quality recycled paper for nearly all uses. The cost for this type of paper is not much more than for other types of printer paper. You can also recycle your printed paper so it can be re-purposed again some day. Most cities and towns have recycling programs or collection of recyclables for the homeowner.

Look for the Energy Star

Energy Star is a joint program of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Department of Energy to help us all save money and protect the environment. When you are purchasing home electronics and appliances look for the ones that have earned the Energy Star seal of approval. They meet strict energy efficiency guidelines set by the EPA and US Department of Energy. The results are already adding up. According to the Energy Star website Americans, with the help of Energy Star products, saved enough energy in 2006 to avoid greenhouse gas emissions equivalent to those from 25 million cars — all while saving \$14 billion on their utility bills.

Last tip - every time a conventional incandescent light bulb burns out switch that socket over to a CFL (compact fluorescent light). A CFL bulb use about 75 percent less energy than standard incandescent bulb and last up to 10 times longer. This mean you could save about \$30 or more in electricity costs over each bulb's lifetime, plus produce about 75 percent less heat. These CFLs are safer to operate and could help cut energy costs associated with home cooling. With just a few simple actions it is easy to go a little green and in the end it helps put more green in our wallet and keep greener in the planet.