Fact Sheet

Commonwealth of Pennsylvania • Department of Environmental Protection

Pollution Prevention Inside Your Home

Consider some of these useful tips inside your home to prevent pollution, conserve resources and save money!

Kitchen

- Look for energy efficient features including the Energy Star® label when purchasing appliances.

- Only use hot water when necessary. Keep a bucket available to catch cold water that comes from the faucet while you are waiting for the water to heat up.

- Use a microwave or small toaster oven to cook small amounts of food. Microwaves and toaster ovens generally use half as much energy as conventional ovens for cooking the same amount of food.

- Crockpots consume less energy than stovetops. Use a crockpot for soups and stews that require long cooking periods.

- Consider using glass and ceramic pans. They cook food just as effectively as metal pans do but at temperatures 25 degrees less than metal pans.

Stove/Oven

- For gas ranges, choose one with an electric ignition instead of the pilot light. It saves more than $25-$30 a year. If your range has a pilot light, check to be sure the flame is blue, not yellow. A yellow flame means gas is burning less efficiently and may need adjustment.

- Do not open the oven unnecessarily. Heat escapes causing longer baking time. Use the timer and look through the oven window instead.

- Cover pots and kettles with a lid and match the size of the pot to the burner. It will heat up faster and cook food more efficiently.

- When cooking on an electric stove, turn the stove top off a few minutes before you are done cooking. The remaining heat will continue to cook the food.

Dishwasher

- Don't rinse food off your dishes unless it is burned or dried on. Instead, scrape food off and conserve water. If you must pre-rinse, use cold water.

- Wash full loads of dishes, but do not overload. Automatic dishwashers are more water efficient than washing by hand.

- Don't use the heat-dry setting on your dishwasher. Instead, turn off the dishwasher after the final rinse and open the door to air dry.

Refrigerator

- Purchase an energy efficient refrigerator. Those with the freezer on top are 35 percent more energy efficient than refrigerators with side-by-side doors. Also keep in mind the size of the refrigerator that your family needs. A refrigerator that is too large will use more energy and cost more, while a refrigerator that is too small will increase shopping trips.

- Check refrigerator and freezer temperature with a thermometer to avoid colder temperatures than necessary. Running the refrigerator 10 degrees colder can increase energy use up to 25 percent. A recommended setting for the refrigerator is 37-40 degrees and for the freezer is 5 degrees.

- Check door seals to prevent wasted energy. Close the door on a piece of paper. Test the effort by pulling the paper out. Do this at several spots in the refrigerator. If it is leaking cold air or the seals are not working correctly, replace the sealing.

- Do not position the oven and refrigerator next to each other. Heat from the oven will make the refrigerator work harder.

- Defrost and clean your freezer every six months and move your refrigerator away from the wall to vacuum the coils annually. This helps the refrigerator run more efficiently.

Washing Machine

- Always use cold water to rinse clothes. The temperature of the water does not affect the cleaning.

- Use the appropriate water level for the clothes being washed. Washing larger loads conserves water. If you have to wash smaller loads, be sure to adjust the load selector.

- Presoak heavily soiled items and wash lightly soiled clothing in the delicate cycle to reduce energy and save wear and tear on the machine.

- Use a phosphate free detergent. If you have a baby, use cloth diapers instead of disposables.

Bathroom

- Install a toilet dam. Place a half-gallon milk container filled with water in the reservoir tank of your toilet every time you flush. This will reduce the amount of water you flush away.

- Check for leaks by dropping food coloring in the reservoir tank of your toilet before you go to bed. Check the bowl in the morning to see if there is any color present. If there is, you have a leak.

- Insulate external hot water pipes.

- Take short showers instead of baths.

- Install a water saving showerhead. It cuts your water use in half and is easy to install.

- Make your shower do double duty. Hang clothes in the bathroom while showering to steam the wrinkles out.

Heating

- Set your thermostat according to how your family uses the house. For example, while away, set the temperature lower than normal.

- Close vents and doors to separate heated from unheated areas of your house and minimize the area that you are heating. Do not block vents or radiators with furniture because they will operate less efficiently.

- In the winter, wear a sweater instead of increasing the temperature.

- Have your furnace checked by a technician every year to prevent inefficient heating, which can waste up to 20 percent of heat over a year. For every degree that you reduce the thermostat, you reduce the furnace's energy consumption by two to three percent.

- Keep the fireplace damper closed when not in use. Leaving the damper open is like opening a window in the middle of the winter. The air you are paying to heat is going right up the chimney.

Air Conditioning

- The best place to install an air conditioner is in the north side of the house, away from the sun.

- Central air conditioning and heat pump systems should be inspected, cleaned and tuned annually by a professional serviceperson. In addition to extending the life of the system, regular service can save almost 10 to 20 percent in energy costs.

- Install a ceiling fan. It has a reversible motor for cooling by circulating the hot air that rises to the ceiling.

- Keep lights to a minimum on hot summer nights.

- Wear lightweight clothing so air can evaporate moisture on your skin.

Computer

- Turn off your computer when you are not using it. Even in sleep mode, your computer is using energy and wasting money.

- If your computer monitor has Energy Star® features, make sure they are enabled. This will shut your computer off in a few minutes if not being used.

Lighting

- Use compact fluorescent light bulbs instead of traditional incandescent lighting. These products produce less heat and save energy.

- Regularly clean all light fixtures, reflectors and lampshades.

- Turn lights off when not in use.

For more information, visit DEP's website at www.dep.state.pa.us, Keyword: "DEP OETD."