



Toolbox Talks

A Quality Service Contractors Publication for Members

10 Ways to be Green



1. Reduce Just by turning off the tap while brushing your teeth or shaving, you can save more than 200 gallons of water per month. Here are some other effective ways you can help to conserve resources:

- Turn off the lights when leaving a room.
- Use both sides of the paper when printing and copying.
- Walk or bike instead of driving.
- Take short showers.
- Drink tap water instead of bottled water.
- Remove unnecessary items from your car to reduce weight.
- Regularly replace the filter on your HVAC system.
- Install faucet aerators.
- Use cold water to wash clothes.
- Stop junk mail.
- Install a programmable thermostat in your home.

2. Unplug Unused Electronics Did you know that a cell phone charger can still consume electricity even when a phone isn't connected to it? In the average home, 25% of the electricity used to power home electronics is consumed while the products are turned off. To stop these "phantom loads" when devices are not in use, unplug them or connect them to power strips, which can then be turned off. (Source:

3. Recycle By recycling materials such as aluminum cans, newspapers, and glass jars, you can save energy and landfill space, conserve natural resources, and also prevent pollution. Recycling one ton of paper saves 17 mature trees, 7,000 gallons of water, three cubic yards of landfill space, two barrels of oil, and 4,100 kilowatt-hours of electricity – enough energy to power the average US home for five months.

4. Look For The ENERGY STAR Label If a product has the ENERGY STAR seal, it meets certain energy efficiency standards. Home appliances, electronics, windows, and roofing are just a few of the products that can qualify, so check a product's box or manual, or speak to a salesperson to see if it is ENERGY STAR compliant. In 2006, ENERGY STAR products helped US consumers save an estimated \$14 billion on their utility bills. In addition to energy savings, there are rebates and federal tax credits available for some ENERGY STAR products.

5. Use Compact Fluorescent Light Bulbs (CFLs) Almost all of the electricity used by an incandescent bulb is converted to heat and not light; CFLs provide a much more efficient alternative. ENERGY STAR labeled CFLs use up to 75 percent less energy and last up to 10 times longer than incandescent bulbs, saving an average of \$30 over the lifetime of each bulb. To maximize their effectiveness, check the packaging to make sure that each CFL is the proper type and wattage for your lamps.

6. Fix Leaks A faucet that leaks one drip per second can waste more than 3,000 gallons of water each year. A leaky toilet can waste up to 200 gallons of water every day. To determine whether your toilet has a leak, place a drop of food coloring in the tank; if the color appears in the bowl without flushing, you have a leak.

7. Buy Recycled Look for the words "postconsumer" or "recycled" when shopping. There are over 4,500 recycled-content products available including paper towels, printer paper, note pads, packing boxes, sleeping bags, laundry detergent bottles, glass containers, nails, carpeting, trash cans, and trash bags. The amount of postconsumer content can vary from a small percentage to 100 percent, so look for labels that indicate the highest percentage.

8. Computer Power Management Enable low-power sleep modes and turn off computers and monitors at night. General Electric implemented power management features on 75,000 of its computers, annually saving the company \$2.5 million dollars and preventing 20,000 tons of carbon dioxide emissions.

9. Properly Dispose of Hazardous Waste Electronics, CFLs, certain batteries, and other household hazardous wastes contain toxic materials so they should not be sent to landfills where they can pollute the surrounding land and water. A single computer monitor may contain 4 pounds of lead as well as other toxic heavy metals. Many companies and municipal governments offer free collection programs, and in some cases you can even get paid to recycle old electronics.

10. Fresh, Local, Organic Food travels an average of 1,200 miles before it reaches your plate, so buy locally produced items to save energy and prevent emissions from going into the air. Also, choose fresh foods instead of frozen, since frozen foods require 10 times more energy to produce. Finally, organic foods are both good for the environment and good for your health since synthetic hormones, most conventional pesticides, as well as other potentially hazardous practices are not used.