

## **An Overview of Energy Efficiency**

By James Cooper

While we often think of energy efficiency as the way to save our environment, we also often consider it a costly endeavor. Did you realize, however, that your home's energy bill might be reduced by up to 30 percent through energy-efficiency that includes the purchase of energy efficient appliances and other products? In other words, you can save yourself money while you do your part to save the planet.

Every time you buy a new air conditioning unit, a new washer or dryer, a new refrigerator, microwave, or piece of office equipment, you are affecting the environment, either positively or negatively depending on your choices. Smart choices of products designed for energy efficiency help the air we all breathe and reduce your energy bill each month.

Here is some basic information about how energy efficiency works and why it's helpful. A great deal of the energy you consume in your home is produced by local power plants that must burn fossil fuel to create the energy. These fossil fuels might be natural gas, coal or oil.

These fossil fuels also create pollution. This pollution harms not only the environment but ultimately the people, as it causes smog, acid rain and respiratory diseases. Fossil fuel pollution is also a strong factor in changing the climate of the globe.

While we hear a lot about the harmful gas emissions that emanate from vehicles, what we don't hear much about is the fact that your home probably produces twice as much of these emissions as the average automobile.

Opting for energy efficiency through your choice of products that are energy efficient is one of the best ways you can reduce your consumption of energy and thus your distribution of harmful emissions of greenhouse gas. Any household that buys equipment designed for energy efficiency puts a big dent in harmful emissions of carbon dioxide.

In fact, over the lifetime of one of these energy efficient appliances or other products you will have reduced pollution the equivalent of what would be saved by one fewer vehicle for seven years. The use of energy efficient household products reduces nitrogen oxides too, which contribute extensively to acid rain and smog.

The average U.S. household spends about 1500 each year on energy. Energy-efficiency can reduce this bill by 400-450 annually. If you're concerned about energy efficiency and wish to not only save the environment but save yourself some money it will help to know which appliances account for what portion of your energy use and bill.

The biggest, which probably comes as no surprise, is your heat and air conditioning. This is a whopping 45 percent of your energy bill. Your water heater uses up 11 percent of

your energy, and your washer and dryer 10 percent. The lighting for your home is seven percent of your energy costs, while your refrigerator is six percent of your bill.

Your dishwasher, computer, monitor, TV, VCR, DVD player and similar equipment each use up about two percent of your total energy consumption. Stoves, microwaves and other smaller appliances generally account for the rest, though at less than two percent of the total each.

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