

FIRST, FIND OUT WHERE YOU CAN SAVE THE MOST ENERGY ...

Use the *Cool Neighborhoods calculator* (Excel spreadsheet) to see how your household compares with the average Fairfax County household. See <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/living/environment/coolcounties/neighborhoods/coolneighborhoodstools.htm>.

Have a professional home energy audit done and follow the recommendations to improve insulation, seal leaks, etc. One source for local auditors is <http://www.natresnet.org/directory/raters.aspx>.

Test for “phantom” or “vampire” loads of electronics using a watt meter, such as a P3 Kill-A-Watt, available on the Internet for \$20–40 (share with neighbors to split the cost). See more information at http://virginia.sierraclub.org/greatfalls/issues/Vampire_flyer.pdf.

THEN, REDUCE YOUR ENERGY USE ...

Lower Your Heating and Cooling Costs ...

Close window curtains and shades during the day in summer, at night in winter. Lined curtains can reduce the drafts from windows and keep rooms more comfortable.

At night and when no one is home, turn down the temperature in the winter and up during the summer.

Use ceiling fans in summer to reduce the need for air conditioning.

Install a programmable thermostat, available at most hardware stores. Your heating and air conditioning repairperson can also install one for you.

Plant shade trees on the south side of the house that lose their leaves in winter to let sun in, but block out the summer sun. Shade in summer can cut cooling costs by 30%. Grow evergreen trees on the north side of the house to block winter winds.

Caulk or seal windows, doors, electrical outlets, and other drafty areas.

Increase insulation, especially in ceilings and around ductwork. Insulation will not only lower your energy use, it will make your house more comfortable and can noticeably reduce mold odors and allergens.

Replace old windows or doors with EnergyStar units, or add storm windows.

Upgrade to a more efficient heating/cooling system, and reduce your heating and cooling costs by up to 20%.

Save Electricity on Appliances and Lighting ...

Replace incandescent bulbs with compact fluorescent bulbs that use less than one-quarter the energy and last many years longer. Some new compact fluorescents work outdoors, in 3-way lamps, and with dimmer switches. Start with the lights that you leave on the most.

Avoid “phantom energy loss” by installing and using power strips to shut electronics down fully when not in use. “Smart” power strips make it easier to do this with computers and peripherals. (Be careful not to shut off your phone!)

Dry clothes outside on a clothesline. No dryer is as efficient as the sun and a breeze—and it’s free.

Remove any extra refrigerator or freezer. Refrigerators manufactured before 1993 use twice the electricity of new EnergyStar models, so those old refrigerators should be hauled away (almost all the parts can be recycled), not given away.

Eliminate outdoor lighting except what you need for safety. Put outdoor lights on a timer or install a sensor to ensure lights are not on in the daytime or when not needed.

Replace your holiday lights with new LED lights that use a fraction of the energy. Put your displays on a timer so they are not on all night.

Replace older major appliances with new EnergyStar models, and look for the EnergyStar label when purchasing other appliances, electronics, and even windows. See <http://www.energystar.gov>.

Reduce Your Water and Hot Water Use ...

Water treatment of both drinking water and waste water takes energy and adds to your carbon footprint; so does heating that water for household use.

Use low-flow toilets and showerheads, water-efficient appliances, and rain barrels that capture rainwater for outdoor use.

Insulate your first three feet of hot water pipe, as well as any water heater over 7 years old. Insulating blankets are sold at home improvement stores.

Set your hot water thermostat at 120 degrees—and turn off electric heaters and set gas heaters at “vacation” when you leave for more than a couple days.

Use the cold water tap when you run just a little water, unless you need it to be hot. Water sitting in the pipes won’t be hot anyway, and this avoids making your water heater “kick on.”

Wash clothes in cold water as a rule, using hot water only when really needed.

Use Renewable Energy ...

Purchase green (renewable) power. To learn how, go to: http://www.eere.energy.gov/greenpower/buying/buying_power.shtml?state=VA.

Got sun? Install a solar water heater or pool heater. For contractors, see <http://energy.sourceguides.com/businesses/byGeo/US/byS/VA/byB/serv/install/byP/solar/solar.shtml>.

Save Energy and Water in Your Garden ...

Rake your leaves instead of using a power blower.

Use a push mower. The EPA says a typical gas lawn mower emits 80 pounds of carbon dioxide each year.

Replace some of your lawn with native plants to reduce both mowing and watering. For resources, see www.vnps.org.

Save energy getting around...

Commute by public transportation or join a carpool.

Telecommute at least some days if you can.

Have kids walk or take a bus to school. Carpool to all children's activities.

Switch to a bicycle or walking whenever possible.

Keep your car tuned and tires inflated to their proper pressure level. Remove any extra weight to improve gas mileage.

Drive less aggressively. Gradual startups and stops and driving at constant speeds can save gas. Slowing down to 55 mph from 65 mph can add two miles per gallon of fuel.

Combine errands into one trip. A warmed-up car uses less gas, so short trips done at one time saves gas.

Switch to a more efficient vehicle. The government's Fuel Economy Guide is available at <http://www.fueleconomy.gov/feg/FEG2000.htm>.

Fly less. If two or more people are traveling, driving produces less greenhouse gas than flying. Better yet, take the train, which produces one-eighth the carbon emissions of flying.

Reduce, reuse, recycle ...

It takes energy to manufacture new items as well as to dispose of them. Reducing your garbage, reusing items, and recycling old ones all reduce your carbon footprint.

Reduce your weekly garbage by recycling, composting, and giving away useable items. Join a Freecycle group in your area to give away and get unwanted items (<http://www.freecycle.org>). For information on recycling and composting in Fairfax County, see <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dpwes/recycling/a-z-index.htm>.

Use durable water bottles filled from your tap, instead of buying bottled water. For picnics and other events, bring jugs of water or juice and paper cups (not Styrofoam or plastic). Bottled water costs 240 to 10,000 times the cost of

tap water, and production of the bottles uses 17 million barrels of oil nationally per year. That's enough to fuel a million U.S. cars per year.

Buy less stuff. When you do need something, look for used items in second-hand stores or through organizations like "Craigslist," <http://washingtondc.craigslist.org/nva>. If you have to buy new, look for recycled content. And instead of buying new books, borrow them from the Fairfax County library system.

Reduce the amount of junk mail that comes to your house. To stop direct mail try this free service: https://www.directmail.com/directory/mail_preference/

Paper or plastic? Neither. Take reusable bags with you to stores. Keep empty bags in your car so you won't forget them. Plastic bags not only require oil to produce, but are a major source of trash in the Chesapeake Bay and pose great risks to wildlife.

More ways to be "cool" ...

Buy local produce from farmer's markets and other producers. Grow a small garden of your own.

Buy products with light/sustainable packaging when possible.

Eat less meat, especially beef and pork. Intensively farmed livestock is responsible for 18 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions and accounts for 37 percent of emissions of methane, which has 25 times the global warming potential of carbon dioxide, and 65 percent of emissions of nitrous oxide, another powerful greenhouse gas that comes from manure.

Minimize or stop using inorganic fertilizers and toxic pesticides in your yard. They wind up in our streams, rivers, and the Chesapeake Bay.

And for even more ideas and resources ...

Visit Fairfax County's Cool Counties website, <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/living/environment/>



GREENING YOUR FAIRFAX COUNTY HOME

Steps you can take to save energy and lower your greenhouse gas emissions at home and on the road



Information about Fairfax County's Cool Counties program is available at <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/living/environment>