

Pledge to Treasure our Planet

To get copies of this pledge or to read more, go to www.treasureourplanet.org

Taking this pledge requires two commitments:

I/we pledge to:

Encourage three friends to take this pledge.

(Immediate family members excluded, although of course their participation is encouraged!)

Your name:

Friend/Neighbor #1:

Friend/Neighbor #2:

Friend/Neighbor #3:

I/we pledge to:

Commit to at least six of the following action items:

1

Move the thermostat down 2°-6° in the winter and up 2°-6° in the summer.

To cut your carbon emissions and energy bill even more, install a programmable thermostat. With a programmable thermostat, you can set your AC or heat to turn off or down when not needed (late at night, during the day while you are at work). Make sure your heat and AC filters are clean and replaced as recommended. Adjust your clothing to the weather!

2

Use a window fan instead of AC during summer nights and evenings.

To cool your home further without AC, close up your house and lower blinds in the morning to keep out the heat. Ceiling and attic/whole-house fans, which can be installed at any time, will also cool your house and use far less energy than AC.

3

Insulate/weatherize your home.

Get a free energy audit and learn specific details of how to weatherize your home. Some possible improvements include air sealing doors and windows, insulating the attic, installing storm windows, insulating the floor above your basement (only in houses with unheated basements), and wall insulation. Most utility companies will conduct a free audit, and will also provide some free compact fluorescent light bulbs. In Massachusetts, call 800-632-8300 to make an appointment.

4

Turn down the water heater to 120°.

Hot water represents about 20 % of all household energy use. Instead of heating water to an uncomfortable temperature only to mix it with cool water, heat your water to 120° or less. When you vacation, make sure to turn down your water heater to "vacation" or "sleep" mode. You will not have to relight the pilot, but your water heater will stop heating water and consuming energy. If your water heater is about ten years old, wrap it in insulation to improve its efficiency (this should be done with professional help), or replace it with a more efficient model. Make sure all your faucets have aerators and that your showerheads are low-flow. Switching from an older 5 gallon/minute showerhead to a newer showerhead will cut your consumption in half.

5

Replace incandescent light bulbs with compact fluorescent light bulbs.

Compact fluorescent light bulbs (CFLs) consume a quarter of the energy of an incandescent bulb and last fifteen times longer. For each 75watt incandescent bulb you replace, you will save about 1,200 lbs of CO2 and \$27/year on electricity. Look for CFLs at stores that sell lightbulbs.

Rethink your interior and exterior lighting habits - do you really need to light the night sky? Install motion sensors for all exterior lights. Turn out the lights when you leave the room. Note: CFLs can be used in most home lighting fixtures, including recessed lighting and exterior fixtures. Most CFLs cannot be used with dimmable fixtures, but the technology is developing rapidly. CFLs must be disposed of properly as they contain mercury

6

Use cold water for laundry.

Heating water accounts for up to 90% of the energy used by a washing machine. Cold water cleans clothes just as effectively as warm water and will prolong the life of your clothing. Consider drying clothes on a laundry line or clothes rack, measures that will further reduce your carbon consumption and also prolong the life of your clothing. Also consider replacing inefficient older units with energy and water efficient front-loading models. Go to www.energystar.com

7

Run the dishwasher on the energy saving setting.

Air dry your dishes and run your dishwasher only when filled. Unplug countertop appliances, coffee makers, toaster ovens, microwaves etc. (anything which has an electronic display is using energy even when it is not "on") when not in use. If you own a second refrigerator or freezer, consider consolidating to one unit. Finally, check if your appliances are Energy Star rated. If not, consider replacing them. Go to www.energystar.com.

□ 8

Connect home entertainment systems and appliance chargers to power strips and turn off power strips when appliances are not in use.

Many devices continue to consume electricity when they are turned off. Any device with perpetually illuminated displays or lights requires energy, hence the popular name for these appliances: “energy vampires”. By either unplugging or turning off power strips when not in use, you will save money and reduce your CO₂ emissions.

□ 9

Travel efficiently. Personal transportation accounts for 35% of all energy usage. When possible, use public transportation. If you are buying a new car, buy a fuel-efficient car. If a hybrid is too expensive, many cars on the market will offer comparable mileage for a cheaper price. Smaller cars generally have better fuel-efficiency.

Increase your mileage and decrease carbon emissions by keeping tires inflated, tuning your engine frequently, removing your roof-rack when not in use, and replacing dirty air filters. These actions will improve your mileage considerably when implemented together.

Organize a carpool and consolidate your trips and errands. Carpooling obviously saves money and also reduces emissions. Sacrifice a bit of personal flexibility to curb global warming.

Avoid high speeds. Fuel efficiency decreases significantly at speeds in excess of 60 mph. Try slowing down by 5mph on the highway. Go to www.fueleconomy.gov.

□ 10

Use energy efficient appliances.

Look for energystar certifications when buying new appliances and consider replacing old appliances, even if they are still functional. Replacing an old fridge with a new energystar certified piece, for example, could save you \$25/month on your electrical bill. Go to www.energystar.gov.

□ 11

Offset carbon emissions from flight and vehicular travel and energy use.

Plant trees. They absorb carbon from the air and help offset carbon emissions. Other solutions can be found at:

www.climateneutralnetwork.com
Climate Neutral Network

www.celb.org
Center for Environmental Leadership in Business

www.coolclimateconcrete.com
program through the Climate Trust

www.carbonfinanace.org
World Bank program

www.carbonfund.org
Carbon offsets

□ 12

Switch to alternative energy sources.

Consider installing a solar hot water system, a photovoltaic system, or a geothermal system. Consult a professional and, as with any project, get a few opinions. If this isn't possible, call your local utility company and request that your electricity is generated from an alternative power source.

Go to <http://www.dsireusa.org/> or <http://www.epa.gov/greenpower/locator/index.htm> or www.eere.energy.gov/greenpower for more information.

Further Suggestions

Recycle.

Most towns offer a comprehensive recycling program, especially in urban areas. If you do not have a recycling bin or do not know what your community's waste management company recycles, contact your town or city hall. If your community does not recycle, ask them why. Recycle paper, cardboard, glass, plastic. Recycle electronics (go to www.epa.gov/reg3wcmd/eCycling.htm). Compost food scraps, grass and leaves. Buy recycled products and products that use recycled packaging. Make sure that you properly dispose of all household chemicals and paints through your town's disposal program.

Support local food suppliers.

By buying locally grown food—look for farmers markets—you will stimulate your regional economy, preserve local farmland, and lower emissions by cutting energy consumption for transportation. Your food shouldn't be better traveled than you are!

Use environmentally sustainable and sound materials for building projects.

Buy environmentally friendly cleaning products whenever possible. Use only environmentally certified wood, preferably local wood. DO NOT USE tropical hardwoods unless they are certified sustainably grown. Use only low-VOC paint, solvents, and glues in order to minimize damage to the environment and to your personal health. See the list of websites for more information.

Conserve water.

Get involved.

Educate yourself about global climate change, talk to your friends, write your local newspapers, join environmental organizations, support politicians who are working to improve the environmental situation (and vote against those who aren't).

Visit our website: treasureourplanet.org

Do you have an organization or business that would be interested in promoting this idea?

Please feel free to post the pledge on your website.