



**City of Fitchburg
Resource Conservation Commission**

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**Ways You Can Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions
Spring 2009 RCC Forum Handout**

Land Use

Support compact, mixed-use neighborhoods. Support local businesses; buy local.

Transportation Options

Commute to work by bicycle, carpool or bus at least once a week. Start or join a ride-sharing program at your place of employment. When you replace your vehicle, consider a hybrid or higher mpg vehicle.

Alternative Energy

Renewable energy can be capital intensive but, over time, a system can pay for itself several times over. It's easiest to include renewable energy systems when building a new home, but retrofitting existing homes can definitely be done. Please visit <http://www.focusonenergy.com/> for more information. Individual homeowners and renters can also encourage their utilities, cities and businesses to use renewable energy sources to promote sustainable energy.

Make Energy Efficiency a Priority

Evaluate the energy use in your home and at your workplace. Use natural light whenever possible. Eliminate wasteful habits, such as leaving lights, computers and office equipment turned on. Unplug unused or seldom used equipment/appliances. Have a competition to see how much energy you can save.

Energy Efficient Equipment & Appliances

As a consumer, every purchasing decision should consider the product's energy efficiency. Energy Star's website www.energystar.gov is an excellent resource to help you make energy-wise purchasing decisions. Saving energy saves you money...and reduces GHG emissions.

Green Buildings

Many people think "Green Buildings" refers to new construction, but some parts of being a "Green Building" can apply to any building. One of the best things to do is look at how much energy your home or business space uses on a daily basis and find ways to lower that energy use (e.g., CFLs instead of incandescent bulbs). With enough correctly placed insulation (attic and walls) and by adjusting the thermostat, you will save not only energy, but a lot of money, too. Many families in Fitchburg find that during the winter they can set their thermostats down to anywhere from 50 to 60 degrees at night or when gone and 55 to 65 degrees when they are at home, while still maintaining comfort (sweaters are definitely in fashion!). Amazingly, given a little time, the body will adjust. Try it! The same type of energy savings is possible during the summer. Again, many families either don't run their air conditioners at all or run them only during the two or so weeks of extreme summer heat. They open the windows during the night to let cool air in and close the windows and window coverings during the day.

Fuel Efficiency

Reducing vehicle emissions could be one of the easiest actions anyone can take to reduce GHG emissions. A vehicle emits a range of gases from its tailpipe into the atmosphere, including CO₂, the principle GHG linked to climate change. Each day, Americans waste approximately **3.8 million gallons** of gasoline by voluntarily idling their cars. (Voluntary idling is idling when the car is not actually being driven, e.g. drive-thru lines; car washes; picking up and dropping off passengers.) For every gallon of gasoline used, a vehicle emits, on average, 20 lbs of CO₂. That translates to **13 million tons of CO₂ produced annually** from voluntary idling! (Diesel engines emit 15% more CO₂ per gallon than gasoline engines.) Recent studies have shown that idling for over 10 seconds uses more gasoline and produces more CO₂ emissions than restarting your engine. If it looks like you'll be idling for longer than 10 seconds, turn off the engine and restart it when you are ready to drive.

For more information about vehicle idling and a Vehicle Idling Quiz:

<http://www.hcdoes.org/airquality/Anti-Idling/IdleQuiz.htm>

<http://www.thehcf.org/antiidlingprimer.html>

For information on Green Vehicles or to see how your vehicle rates:

<http://www.epa.gov/greenvehicles/Index.do>

Water Efficiency

Are you Water-Wise? Being Water-Wise is doing all that you can to conserve water! Did you know that City water has to be pumped from hundreds of feet below the ground, which takes a lot of energy? (Imagine carrying even a few gallons of water up the stairs of a 30 story building!) Did you also know that watering lawns and gardens during summer is one of the highest uses of water in Fitchburg? Using drip irrigation or periodically spot watering at the roots of your flowers, trees, vegetables, etc. gets the best results for the least amount of water. Rain water collected in a rain barrel or by a dehumidifier is perfect for spot watering. Also, consider letting your lawn do what it does naturally, turning light brown during a summer dry spell. It will green-up again after a good soaking rain. Being Water-Wise is also being Dollar-Wise; with Fitchburg's residential water rates, the more water you use; the higher your rate.

Recycling

The first leg of the recycling triangle, "reduce" aims to slow the flow of manufactured or processed goods coming into our homes. Less in; less out. Both result in less fuel consumed transporting goods in and waste or recyclables out. Less out also implies a longer life for the landfill. Easy ways to reduce: drink tap water instead of bottled water; compost leaves instead of bagging them; and buy economy-sized packages rather than convenience-sized or individual servings packages. All will save you money.

Urban Forestry

Plant a tree. A tree takes carbon dioxide out of the air. When well sited, a tree can also reduce the homeowner's need to run a fan or air conditioner during the warm months of the year. Just be careful where you place any tree you plant. Unless you have permission, avoid City property. Also, try not to shade your neighbor's garden.

GHG Emissions Education

Participate in an EnAct or Sustain Dane group to learn about ways you can reduce your GHG emissions by over 2,000 lbs per year. Visit your utility's website for current and past usage information. Visit www.co2gether.org to determine your carbon footprint.

What else can you do? **Spread the word ... to family, friends and businesses.** 😊