

Slow Down Your Rising Energy Costs – Without Spending a Penny

With energy re-regulation off the legislative table, many Marylanders are bracing for another year of rising costs. The good news? Energy accounts for up to 50% of the average office's operating costs, so this is an area where you can save considerably with some simple, sensible adjustments.

It's easiest to accomplish energy savings with a two-pronged approach – through conservation and efficiency. In other words, through adjustments in your company culture and behavior, and in your office technology. Of the two of these, conservation requires the smallest investment – often hovering around zero – so let's start there.

A good energy conservation plan often involves steps like these:

Switching off lights in unused or sunlit rooms - If your building has floor-to-ceiling windows, you may not need overhead lights during the day...and you certainly don't need them when a room is empty. Turn off the lights you don't need during the day, and ask your cleaning crew to turn off all the lights when they leave at night.

Turning off computers at night – Be sure to turn off the peripherals also: the external hard drives, routers, printers, and so forth. If you use surge protectors, just flip the switch to “off.”

Lowering the blinds on sunny windows in the summer – This gives your air conditioning system a break. When you don't have light – and heat – pouring in, you can nudge your thermostat up a few degrees, and save a few more kilowatts.

Fixing leaky faucets and toilets –. You're not just saving water when you do this. Water supply and treatment facilities consume roughly 56 *billion* kilowatt-hours per year- enough to power 5 million homes for a year! Closer to home, letting just one faucet run for 5 minutes consumes as much energy as leaving a 60-watt incandescent light bulb on for 14 hours. And that's not even touching the amount of energy needed to provide hot water for that length of time.

Starting a recycling program – According to the EPA, roughly 254 million tons of garbage were generated in the U.S. in 2007 – averaging out to 4.62 lbs per person per day. Of those 4.62 lbs, only 1.5 lb. was recycled.

To bring that home to your business – paper represents 70% of the business waste stream, with an average of 1/2 lb being generated per person per day. If your business recycles just one ton of paper, you'll save 4100 kilowatt-hours, 2 barrels of oil, and 7 trees, while keeping 6 tons of CO₂ out of the atmosphere.

It doesn't end there...you can save megawatts of energy and keep tons of toxic waste out of the landfills by recycling your batteries, E-waste, toner cartridges, cell phones, and fluorescent light bulbs.

Of course, this is just a small sampling of the actions you can take to conserve energy, reduce your bills, and ease your impact on the planet. To discover more tips in a green home or office makeover, or for help with finding recycling resources, contact me at phila@your-words-worth.com or visit my new site, <http://www.freshgreenimage.com/green-irene>.

For additional information about green design and building products, check out Alter-Ego (www.alter-e.com). To create a comprehensive sustainability strategy for your company, contact ThreeIN Consulting at 410-702-5750 or <http://tinyurl.com/dxfua9>.