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Just the Eco Facts Please

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“WATER COOLER” CONVERSATION

When I began writing this new series in the fall of 2008 I hoped that the readers would respond, well you certainly **have!** The number of requests for actual benefits and “Eco-Facts” has surprised me so I thought this week we would supply you with some of the facts that have crossed my desk, it makes excellent “Water cooler” conversation.

Transportation is number one on the hit list for environmental impact, Airplanes being the largest offender, followed by vehicles of all kinds. A full sized SUV compared to a mid-sized hybrid could reduce your road pollution by a staggering 70%. The difference in driving at 80 KM an hour vs100KM



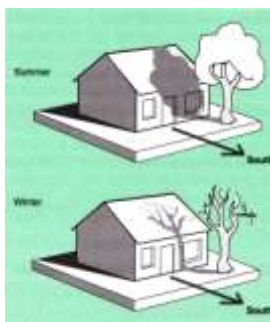
hour translates into a 15% saving in fuel. A poorly maintained car can produce 50% more pollution than one maintained to manufactures standards. Proper tire pressure can improve your gas mileage by up to

10%. One fuel-user that most people ignore is your lawn mower. A season's lawn cutting for an average subdivision lawn with a gas lawn mower causes the same amount of pollution as driving your car for eight hours straight at 80 KM an hour.

One survey I got was on food distribution and a couple of facts here are disturbing. The average restaurant meal contains food from five different countries. This translates into an average of 2000KM in transportation energy costs. One fact that few people realize, cattle emit methane which is 20 times more

dangerous than carbon monoxide to our atmosphere. Nearly 40% of the green house gasses in New Zealand come from their sheep. Now do you want to start that backyard vegetable garden and reduce your red meat intake!

Getting closer to home, there are numerous studies on saving home energy. I thought I would just mention a few. Want to reduce your home heating costs, for every degree you lower your thermostat you save 2% of your heating bill. A programmable thermostat will quickly pay for itself if used correctly. Insulating your basement will save you up to 25% of your heating bill; simple caulking of your windows and doors can add another 10% saving. Every home computer/scanner/printer desk installation should be on a power bar. Even when **turned off at the machine the “ghost” power is still running.** This can save an average home up to \$100.00 a year in electrical bills. About 1/3 of your energy costs are related to heating



your water tank, a solar hot water system can reduce that by up to 50%.

One area that is not commonly known is basic lighting. At one point this cost was around 2% of an average electrical bill. Today with the drive for reduced heating and cooling costs the conventional light bulb can contribute up to 10%

of your heating costs. A regular light bulb only converts 15% of the purchased energy into lighting. It is time to get serious about those compact fluorescent bulbs. While we are talking about heating, an average home can gain up to 15% of its heating from passive solar. However a properly positioned home with low-e Aragon windows utilizing up to 10% of the floor plan in south facing windows can derive up to 50% of its home heat from the sun. Either plant some trees or save the trees on your west side of the home. A good windbreak can reduce air leakage in a home by up to 40%.

It is probably no surprise that 95% of your household water is used in the bathroom or laundry. Change that old toilet which uses up to 13L of water to a new 6L or a dual flush at 2L or 4L. A simple change to a low flow shower head can drop your shower water use by 50%. Add another fixture once you have used that water, a drain water recovery unit. This drain replacement fixture costs less than \$1000.00 but can recover up to 30% of your hot water.



Let's look at a couple of garden eco-facts. An average subdivision lawn will use up to 42,400 gallons of water in an average growing season...no that is not a misprint. Increasing the use of native plants and shrubs will help considerably.

You should be able to collect up to 90% of your roof rainwater by means of rain barrels or underground storage. Our forefather's use of cisterns does not look so dumb today. An inch of rain translates into four gallons of water per square yard of lawn; think how much you would collect during the summer.

One last fact- in 1950 it took 25% of one family member's income to support a home. Today it may take up to 40-50% of two incomes to meet present homeowners living costs. The reason is simple, our homes are too large and are lacking in substantial energy efficiency. The way of the future is a compact, energy efficient and environmentally sustainable home.



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