

Going Green With



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Reducing your Carbon Footprint

In the last Going Green with SCI REMC article we discussed that a carbon footprint is a measure of greenhouse gasses produced as the result of the activities of an individual or entity. An individual's carbon footprint is usually measured in tons or pounds of carbon dioxide equivalent and can be broken down into primary and secondary footprints. Let's look at some ways to reduce your carbon footprint.

Your primary footprint is the direct emissions of CO₂ from burning fossil fuels for transportation and energy consumption. Transportation accounts for 33 percent of CO₂ emissions in the United States. Changes as simple as planning ahead to accomplish all your errands in one trip and getting good directions to eliminate extra miles can reduce emissions. Try walking, biking, carpooling or taking public transportation whenever possible and increase your car's fuel efficiency by keeping up on maintenance and removing the weight of unnecessary items from your trunk. If you are in the market for a new car keep in mind that if you drive a hybrid you could save approximately 500,000 pounds of CO₂ emissions over the life of the car.

Home energy use is responsible for 21 percent of US CO₂ emissions. There are an abundance of ways to reduce your home energy use, some as simple as turning off and unplugging electronics when not in use. Turn off lights when you leave a room or install motion sensors. If you replace three incandescent light bulbs with three compact fluorescent bulbs you could eliminate 5,000 pounds of CO₂ over the life of the bulbs. When you purchase new appliances look for models with Energy Star ratings. Purchase a programmable thermostat so you are not heating or cooling your house unnecessarily. In the summer keep cool air in by keeping the window shades closed, and open them to let in sunlight in the winter. Also make sure your walls and ceilings have adequate insulation.

Your secondary footprint measures indirect CO₂ emissions associated with the products you use. The more you buy the more emissions will be caused on your behalf. Reduce emissions from packaging and shipping by buying local as much as possible, buying in bulk, and avoiding items with excessive packaging. Buy reusable products instead of disposable ones. Purchase concentrated forms of cleaning supplies or make your own.

As you can see there are many small steps you can take to reduce the size of your carbon footprint. If we all worked towards a carbon footprint the size of a baby bootie instead of one the size of a professional basketball player imagine the difference we could make.

If you have questions or comments please send them to: askus@sciremc.com.

Sources

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