



By John Imes

Time for a Low Carbon Makeover

As Congress considers various legislative proposals to stabilize greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and business contemplates a transition to a low-carbon economy, each of us can take personal responsibility to reduce emissions and the impacts of global warming in future years.

Global warming results from burning fossil fuels, including the coal, oil and gas that powers our homes, businesses and vehicles. Small improvements in efficiency can make a real difference in reducing carbon dioxide (CO₂) and other GHG emissions that trap heat in the atmosphere. For example, it's estimated that a 2 percent improvement in energy efficiency each year will over time, provide more than 50 percent of the required emission reductions to stabilize GHG levels — but we need to get started ...

At Home

The energy used at home is responsible for about 25 percent of all CO₂ emissions or about 18 tons per home per year — three times the amount produced by the average automobile. Transforming your home using low carbon strategies is a quick and cost-effective way to reduce energy use and greenhouse gas



emissions. The Green Built Home Remodeling Checklist offers more than 300 checklist items including energy efficient and low carbon features such as:

- Home Performance with ENERGY STAR® works with a network of trained professionals to identify the cause of problems such as air leaks, inadequate insulation, or other inefficiencies at home.
- ENERGY STAR-qualified windows, light fixtures, appliances and compact fluorescent light bulbs. A typical U.S. household spends \$1,500 a year on energy bills. With ENERGY STAR, you can save up to 30% or more than \$450 per year.
- Blown-in dense-packed cellulose insulation to R-50 levels.
- Quiet, energy-efficient bathroom and kitchen exhaust fans
- Solar domestic hot water heating or other renewable energy system to eliminate or significantly reduce the greenhouse gases generated by your energy use.
- Deciduous trees planted such that when mature they will shade the house in the summer.

*Be sure to check with Focus on Energy for information on rebates, tax credits and other incentives for purchasing ENERGY STAR products, renewable energy and more.

On the Road

Choosing a more fuel-efficient vehicle such as a hybrid, biodiesel, E85 (Ethanol), electric or clean diesel is one of the best ways you can reduce global warming and promote energy independence. The new federal stimulus package also provides a tax credit for families that purchase plug-in hybrid vehicles of up to \$7,500 to spur the next generation of American cars.

And by avoiding aggressive driving, keeping tires properly inflated, and walking, riding a bike, sharing a ride or taking mass transit, you'll reduce CO₂ emissions that much more.

On Vacation

With vacation season upon us, how you travel impacts your carbon footprint a great deal. Choose tourism destinations and businesses that are committed to reducing impacts on the environment. For example,

the Travel Green Wisconsin program certifies tourism businesses that measure their environmental footprint and work to continuously improve their operations by reducing waste, conserving energy, water and other natural resources.

When traveling, stay at hotels that offer towel and linen reuse and participate in hotel energy efficiency efforts

by turning off lights, the TV and air conditioner when you leave the room. And don't forget to adjust your home thermostat and put lights on a timer or motion sensor to conserve energy while you're away. ▲



Green-it-yourself resources

- Green Built Home Remodeling Checklist and information available at www.greenbulthome.org
- Home Performance With Energy Star: www.focusonenergy.com
- Reduce My Carbon Footprint: www.co2gether.org
- Mpowering Madison: www.mpoweringmadison.com
- Travel Green Wisconsin: www.travelgreenwisconsin.com