



Top Myths about Energy Efficiency and Reversing the Climate Crisis

Myth #1: We are powerless to do anything about global warming.

Fact: When we work together to reduce carbon dioxide emissions, we can make a significant impact. When we join with other communities, we can change the world. James Hansen, NASA's top climate scientist, says we have a chance over the next eight years to transform the trajectory of global warming. This is what Cool Rochester is all about.

Myth #2: Reducing our energy consumption will reduce our quality of life.

Fact: Lighting, transportation, heating and cooling can all be done more efficiently and effectively. Get a programmable thermostat that turns on the heat or AC just before you come home from work. Efficiency improvements can improve your health and enrich your life. Enjoy a book on Metro and ignore the traffic reports, or even try walking or biking to work instead of an expensive health club membership.

Myth #3: Energy efficiency measures are too much trouble and too costly to be worthwhile.

Fact: Energy efficiency measures save a lot of money and are often very easy!

Myth #4: If I've made energy improvements in my own home, I'm done.

Fact: We need to reduce CO₂ by household, block, congregation, business, agency, neighborhood, community, state, nation, and world. Everyone can help! If you've done your part at home, you're in a better position to help others.

Myth #5: Carbon offsets take care of the problem so we can go on with business as usual.

Fact: Offsets may help to build the energy infrastructure of the future, but right now reducing our own energy use is the only way to reduce carbon emissions.

Myth #6: Turning lights off and on and unplugging unused appliances consumes more energy than leaving them on.

Fact: If you leave the room for 3 minutes or more, it's more efficient to turn the lights off—including fluorescents. Find ways to turn lights off whenever possible, including motion sensors, photocells, and timers. Many electrical products - from air conditioners to VCRs to mobile phone and iPod chargers - cannot be switched completely off unless you unplug the device or turn it off at a power strip. Because these products draw power 24 hours a day, often without the knowledge of the consumer, they are called "energy vampires."

Myth #7: Computers should be left on when you're not using them.

Fact: Laptops and desktops should be shut off when not used for several hours or overnight. Monitors and peripherals should all be turned off at the surge protector after proper shutdown. Some peripherals - especially DSL and cable modems - draw power even if the computer is not using them. When you're away from your computer, use the "sleep" or "energy-saver" mode. This will turn off the monitor, but will not shut down your computer.

Myth #8: Idling your car uses less gasoline than shutting off and starting back up.

Fact: 2 minutes of idling uses about the same amount of gas as one mile driving. Even in winter, there is no need to idle for 5 minutes to "warm it up" when 30 seconds will do just fine. Idling gets ZERO miles per gallon.

Myth #9: Showers use as much water as taking a bath.

Fact: If you have an old showerhead (pre-1992), you use 5 gallons of water per minute. That's 20 gallons for just a 4-minute shower! An average bath uses 30-50 gallons. A lowflow shower head will cut your water use in half.

Myth #10: Saving money on your heating bills requires expensive upgrades.

Fact: An energy-efficient boiler or furnace can be a very effective improvement, but the simplest way to save money on the heat bill is to turn the thermostat down. A \$15 set of warm pajamas can go a long way toward making a \$1000 annual energy savings without sacrificing comfort. \$500 of caulking and added attic insulation will pay back 20 times over or more in energy savings.

Myth #11: A car is a necessity in the big city. Professional people cannot commute to work, meetings, or special events by transit or bicycle.

Fact: One of the joys of living in a city is the opportunity to be close to work, shopping, and entertainment. The more we use solutions like transit, shared cars, and bike lanes, the more we stand up for increased investment in these solutions.

Myth #12: Compact fluorescents are the most efficient form of lighting.

Fact: Compact fluorescents (CFL's) are a tremendous first step because they are much more efficient than incandescent bulbs. In the future, LED lights may become the light bulb of choice for efficiency purposes. But the most efficient light source is the sun. Low-e windows and skylights can admit more natural light without excessive heat.

Myth #13: Closing off vents / registers on forced-air HVAC systems reduces energy use.

Fact: Vent/register closing actually increases energy use for a typical house. If you condition only a part of your house, the reductions are offset by increased duct system losses, mostly due to increased duct leakage. Therefore, experts do not recommend that you close registers to save energy if the ducts are located outside conditioned space.

"Never doubt that a small group of concerned citizens can make a difference. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."

Margaret Mead