

Stay Green for the Holidays

As another year ends, we find ourselves in the middle of yet another holiday season! In addition to the guarantee of cool weather, decorative lights and office parties, there is a very high probability that many of us will be taking extended leave at some point in the next month. While the to-do list for many of us will include things like setting an auto-reply message and finishing a few important last-minute items, we should also take a few moments to be sure our office is ready for a break as well. We've put together a few tips to ensure you can stay green even while you are away from the office for the holidays. Here they are:

- **Shut Down Electronics** – Be sure to shut down any equipment in your office or lab that will not be needed while you are away. This may include items like computers, monitors, printers, etc. You could also consider turning off laboratory equipment like autoclaves or incubators if they will not be needed.
- **Turn Off Power Strips** – Even when shut down, many electronics still consume electricity. You can avoid this by making sure equipment like computers and monitors are unplugged from the power outlet. To make things easier, you could plug these items into a power strip and simply turn off the strip before you leave.
- **Turn Off Lights (Holiday Lights Too!)** – One of the easiest things to forget is turning the lights off before we leave. Some workplaces at the NIH have occupancy sensors that make this unnecessary, otherwise we should always remember to check the lights before leaving, especially before a long break. This applies to the decorative lights many of us like to hang in the office as well. If you want to leave the lights so others can enjoy them, please consider using a timer and LED lights to reduce energy consumption.
- **Close Curtains and Blinds** – Exposed windows can leak a lot of heat from a building. By covering windows with curtains or closing the blinds, this heat loss can be minimized.
- **Check the Break Room Too** – There may be appliances in the break room that can be unplugged, such as a coffee maker. There are also appliances like refrigerators and freezers that can potentially be turned down if many employees will be away at the same time. It's also a good time to clean out the refrigerator and consolidate the remaining items to improve efficiency.

Hopefully you find these tips helpful as you prepare for the holidays!