

Quick Tips for Reducing Your Electricity Use

Reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions is crucial for reversing the current climate crisis. In “The Snowball Effect of Climate Change” article in this issue, we describe the importance of reducing greenhouse gas emissions from electricity use, particularly from air conditioning. However, there are many ways we can decrease our electricity use and they all serve to decrease GHG emissions. Here are a few tips for conserving electricity at the NIH and at home.

In the Lab

- Improve Your Freezer Management – Performing regular preventative maintenance on your freezer will ensure the compressor is functioning optimally. This helps save energy and makes your freezer less likely to fail!
- Shut Your Hood Sash – Keeping the sash closed or lowered on a Variable Air Volume hood greatly reduces the volume of air pumped through the hood. Since the hood is removing conditioned air from the building, lowering the air volume also lowers the need for air conditioning or heating.
- Prioritize Energy Efficiency When Purchasing New Equipment – The NIH is required to purchase Energy Star certified equipment when available. However, many types of equipment have not been evaluated for the Energy Star label. In these cases, look for third-party evaluations of energy use to determine if the equipment is energy efficient.

At Home or In the Office

- Close or Open Blinds Depending on the Season – South-facing windows are particularly sensitive to heating from sunlight. Open the blinds on these windows to allow natural heating during the winter and close the blinds in the summer to prevent unwanted heating.
- Ensure Equipment and Appliances are Turned Off When Not in Use – There are many methods for making sure equipment and appliances are not consuming electricity when they are not in use. Ensure your office uses occupancy sensors to turn off overhead lighting. Unplug chargers and rarely used appliances between uses. Turn off your monitors before leaving the office.
- Report any Maintenance Issues – Reporting maintenance issues for electrical equipment ensures they are addressed in a timely manner. Equipment that is functioning properly uses less electricity.
- Add Plants to Your Property – Trees and shrubs consume carbon dioxide and produce oxygen, thus reducing GHG in the environment. Plants also reduce the heat island effect common in urban areas from hardscape such as buildings and pavement. Keeping the area around your home cooler in the summer will reduce the need for electricity to operate air conditioning. Add native plants to support the natural habitat of pollinators and remove invasive species that outcompete other plants. Invasive vines should especially be removed, as they will kill underlying trees and shrubs and permanently eliminate their ability to remove GHG from the atmosphere.