

SUSTAINABILITY TODAY NEWSLETTER

Volume 2/Issue 1

ABOUT US

The Texas Tech University Recycling Center is housed within the Student Housing Services. The center has been in operation for over 6 years and has continually grown year after year.

Today, the Recycling Center collects all forms of recyclables from plastics, glass, styrofoam, cardboard, paper, aluminum, tin, electronics, and anything in between! The money collected goes back into the students through

WORK!

This week's newsletter is focused on tips for being sustainable around the workplace. With the holidays over, we are all settling back into our work routines; let's make a resolution to be more sustainable at work! Also, we are excited about the annual RecycleMania Tournament beginning in just a few short weeks, and we will need your help in competing with over 600 colleges and universities including several Big XII schools! This newsletter is focused on helping you think green around the workplace.

The Bigger Picture

Our offices have become skyscrapers of waste! Maybe it's because we don't think of our office as our home, or we believe that if someone else is responsible for taking care of our paychecks then they are responsible for our trash, too. They gorge on electricity, guzzle water, and expel toxins. They are beasts burdening our environment. The average office worker uses 10,000 sheets of copy paper each year. Across all U.S. businesses, the annual total is 21 million tons of copy paper, equaling more than 4 trillion sheets. About 400 billion photocopies are made each year at the rate of 750,000 copies produced every minute. Besides paper, copies require ink. American businesses go through 15 million toner cartridges every year, enough to stretch from New York City to Zurich...in Switzerland!

What drives all this energy? Commercial buildings use 18 percent of all the energy in the country, and nearly one-quarter of that is used for lighting.

What is a shame is that much office electricity is used to light offices when they are vacant or when there is sufficient natural light to permit working without lamps or overhead lighting.

In addition to sapping energy, office buildings are responsible for more than 10 percent of all the water used in the United States. Last we checked, most people aren't showering, watering lawns, doing dishes, or laundering clothes at the office. Workers are mostly flushing and washing their hands...at least we hope they are!

What we do know is that workers drive an average of ten thousand miles a year. We call it commuting. In doing so, they use 67.5 billion gallons of gasoline. This would be bad enough if they just stayed at their desks. But





Contact Us

Student Housing Services

3301 Physical Plant Drive

Lubbock, TX 79409

Mail Stop: 3142

housing.gogreen@ttu.edu

www.housing.ttu.edu/gogreen/

one-third of all workers leave the office to buy food and spend most of their lunch hour getting it. The waste from lunch alone amounts to enough disposable cups and plastic utensils to more than circle the equator every workday!

Food waste is another problem. Ten percent of all the waste produced by an office is food. Imagine that multiplied by every business in the country. That's an awful lot of ketchup, mustard, and salt and pepper packets.

However, the office supply room contributes the most to the office waste problem with tons of paper, pens, paper clips, and rubber bands needlessly tossed out.

To be sure, most of us aren't in charge of our office policies. We can't order more environmentally friendly supplies, adjust the thermostat for the whole building we work in, or mind the trash for recycling. But there are some things we can do individually to help work for the environment at the office.

Keeping all that in mind, we've created the "Simple Steps" to be just that. Taking into account all the points of the Big Picture, they give you the biggest impact with the least amount of effort.

"Here are five things you can do: buy five-gallon jugs of water and refill bottles for daily consumption, turn off lights when you leave a room, turn off or lower heat when you leave for work, use a down comforter instead of running the heat, and use reusable rags instead of paper towels"- Martha Stewart

THE SIMPLE STEPS

1. Double-side your copies. Whether printing or copying, use both sides of a piece of paper. If just one in four office workers made all of their copies double-sided, the annual savings would equal 130 billion sheets of paper, a stack thicker than the diameter of the earth! When you have no more use for those copies, make sure they find their way into a recycling bin!

2. Carpool. If the average commuter carpooled every day, he or she would save five hundred gallons of gasoline and 550 pounds of poisonous exhaust emissions every year. Commuters sharing a ride to work would be the equivalent of taking 67.5 million cars off the road—four times the number of new cars sold in the United States per year.

3. Use a ceramic mug for your coffee! Americans use more than fourteen billion paper cups every year, enough to circle the world fifty-five times. The Styrofoam kind will stay on the planet for nine generations, enough time for your great-great-great-great-great-great-great-grandkids to be born!

TIPS FOR USE AT WORK!

Car: Keeping your tires fully inflated could improve your gas mileage by around 3 percent (it also makes your tires last longer). The average American, who drives twelve thousand miles per year, could save about 16 gallons of gasoline annually (assuming 25 mpg) just by maintaining his or her tires at the proper pressure. Across all U.S. households, the

gasoline savings could total 1.6 billion gallons —approximately the total volume of ice cream produced in the United States each year!

Coffeemaker: Mind the amount of water you use when brewing. Making coffee uses about a third of the tap water consumed in most of North America and Europe. If every worker cut back on water fill by one cup, we would save almost ten million gallons per day. Over the course of a year, this would save enough water to provide two gallons to each of the 1.2 billion people on the planet who don't have access to safe water at all.

Stirrers: Don't use disposable stirrers. Just pour in your sugar and milk first then add coffee. Each year, Americans throw away 138 billion straws and stirrers, enough to make a giant straw statute—twenty times taller than the Statue of Liberty!

Food Storage: Choose glass or ceramic containers that can be reused. They are healthier than plastic, and you will reduce the waste generated. Four out of five office workers share food brought in by fellow employees. Using glass or ceramic for this food reduces the possibility that you or your co-workers will be exposed to harmful seepage from plastic containers. If you do prefer to use plastic containers, make sure they are BPA free. You'll also avoid creating additional waste from disposable trays, plates, and containers.

Lunch: Bring your lunch from home if you can. A disposable lunch creates between four to eight ounces of garbage everyday. That can add up to as much as one hundred pounds per year! Bringing lunch from home could result in the U.S. workforce's saving more than ten billion pounds of trash—equal to the weight of the Great Pyramid in Egypt.

Copier: Using the "standby" button on your copier will lighten your energy load by 70 percent. It costs about \$50 million to power the nation's copiers annually. Cut that by 70 percent and save \$35 million and enough energy to provide a month's worth of electricity to more than one hundred thousand homes.

Paper Clips: Reuse your paper clips. Enough paper clips are produced to provide every person in the country with at least three. If one out of every four workers reused their paper clips, it would save more than \$1 million.

Pens: Try to use refillable pens, pencils, and markers. Disposable plastic pens are not recyclable, nor are they biodegradable. Throw one away, and it will still be in a landfill fifty thousand years from now.

Rubber Bands: Avoid using rubber bands if you can. About three-quarters of rubber bands are synthetic, made from crude oil. When these are incinerated at the dump, significant health effects can result. In North America, 2.2 million metric tons of synthetic rubbers are used per year. This could make almost a quarter of a million rubber band balls as big as the world's largest ball of twine (in Cawker City, Kansas).

Computers: Activate the power management function, or sleep mode, on your monitors and CPU boxes. If just ten employees did it, they would reduce energy costs by nearly \$500 per year. You can also power down your computer when you leave work for additional energy savings!

Lighting: Turn off your office lights if natural light from the sun is available. You will have less eye fatigue due to glare. Seventeen percent of the energy used for lighting offices is wasted when offices are left vacant or lights are unnecessarily turned on in a sunlit room. The wasted energy is enough to drive a car to the planet Jupiter!

Labels: Try not to use them, or use those that have recycled content. Some labels make it impossible to recycle the paper, envelopes, or other materials on which they are placed. Instead, try printing directly onto the envelopes and packages.

Litter: Dispose of waste properly. Ninety-four percent of people identify litter as a major environmental problem. The biggest sources of litter are cigarette butts, bottles and cans (including tops and ring pulls), candy wrappers, and fast-food packaging. More than two billion pounds of cigarette butts are discarded world wide—about two pounds for every person in China!

Fun and Games

Each newsletter, we will also bring you a fun game or trivia to help you remember to Go Green!

Answer all of the trivia questions correctly by sending an email to housing.gogreen@ttu.edu with 'Trivia Answer' in the subject line and you will be placed in a drawing for a prize! Answers are due one week after the newsletter is sent out , and winners will be notified via email.

Remember, if you print this newsletter, use both sides of the page and once you are done with it, make sure it finds its way to one of the many recycling bins located throughout campus!

Do items such as cell phone chargers, fans, coffeemakers, desktop printers, radios, etc. consume energy even when they are turned off?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. No idea

Compact Florescent Lighting -CFLs- use _____ of the energy needed for incandescent bulbs.

- a. 25%
- b. 50%
- c. 75%
- d. 100%

How many gallons of motor gasoline does the average American consume in one year?

- a. 150 gallons
- b. 500 gallons
- c. 310 gallons
- d. 750 gallons