# 10 Ways to Go Green at Work

**GREENER HOMES ARE IN THE SPOTLIGHT** these days, but what about the other places where many of us spend huge chunks of our time—our offices? Some simple changes of habit can save energy and resources at work, and these small steps can be multiplied by persuading the powers-that-be at your workplace to adopt environmentally friendly (and often cost-effective) policies.

### 1. BE BRIGHT ABOUT LIGHT
**Artificial lighting accounts for 44 percent of the electricity use in office buildings.**

• Make it a habit to turn off the lights when you're leaving any room for 15 minutes or more and utilize natural light when you can.

• Make it a policy to buy Energy Star-rated light bulbs and fixtures (**www.energystar.gov**), which use at least two-thirds less energy than regular lighting, and install timers or motion sensors that automatically shut off lights when they're not needed.

### 2. MAXIMIZE COMPUTER EFFICIENCY
**Computers in the business sector unnecessarily waste $1 billion worth of electricity a year.**

• Make it a habit to turn off your computer—and the power strip it's plugged into—when you leave for the day. Otherwise, you're still burning energy even if you're not burning the midnight oil. (Check with your IT department to make sure the computer doesn't need to be on to run backups or other maintenance.) During the day, setting your computer to go to sleep automatically during short breaks can cut energy use by 70 percent. Remember, screen savers *don't* save energy.

• Make it a policy to invest in energy-saving computers, monitors, and printers and make sure that old equipment is properly recycled. Look for a recycler that has pledged not to export hazardous e-waste and to follow other safety guidelines. For more information on how to recycle your computer go to **www.computertakeback.com**. Computers that still work, and are less than five years old, can be donated to organizations that will refurbish them and find them new homes. Find needy charities at **www.sharetechnology.org** and **www.techsoup.org**. You may even get a tax deduction.

### 3. PRINT SMARTER
**The average U.S. office worker goes through 10,000 sheets of copy paper a year.**

• Make it a habit to print on both sides or to use the back side of old documents for faxes, scrap paper, or drafts. Avoid color printing and print in draft mode whenever feasible.

• Make it a policy to buy chlorine-free paper with a higher percentage of post-consumer recycled content. Also consider switching to a lighter stock of paper or alternatives made from bamboo, hemp, organic cotton, or kenaf. Recycle toner and ink cartridges and buy remanufactured ones. According to Office Depot, each remanufactured toner cartridge "keeps approximately 2.5 pounds of metal and plastic out of landfills...and conserves about a half gallon of oil."

### 4. GO PAPERLESS WHEN POSSIBLE

• Make it a habit to think before you print: could this be read or stored online instead? Request to be removed from mailing lists for any unwanted catalogs, newsletters, magazines, and junk mail. Visit **www.newdream.org/junkmail** for more information.

• Make it a policy to post employee manuals and similar materials online, rather than distribute print copies. They're easier to update that way too.

### 5. RAMP UP YOUR RECYCLING

• Make it a habit to recycle everything your company collects. Just about any kind of paper you would encounter in an office, including fax paper, envelopes, and junk mail, can be recycled. So can your old cell phone, PDA, or pager (see **www.collectivegood.com** for more information).
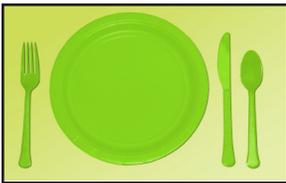
• Make it a policy to place recycling bins in accessible, high-traffic areas and provide clear information about what can and can not be recycled.

### 6. CLOSE THE LOOP

• Make it a policy to purchase office supplies and furniture made from recycled materials. To find out more about recycled office supplies, visit **www.conservatree.org**.

### 7. WATCH WHAT (AND HOW) YOU EAT

• Make it a habit to bring your own mug and dishware for those meals you eat at the office.

• Make it a policy to provide reusable dishes, silverware, and glasses. Switch to Fair Trade and organic coffee and tea, and buy as much organic and local food as possible for parties and other events. Provide filtered drinking water to reduce bottled-water waste.

### 8. RETHINK YOUR TRAVEL

• Make it a habit to take the train, bus, or subway when feasible instead of a rental car when traveling on business. If you have to rent a car, some rental agencies such as EV Rental Cars (**www.evrental.com**) now offer hybrids and other high-mileage vehicles.

• Make it a policy to invest in videoconferencing and other technological solutions that can reduce the amount of employee travel.

### 9. RECONSIDER YOUR COMMUTE

• Make it a habit to carpool, bike, or take transit to work, and/or telecommute when possible. If you need to drive occasionally, consider joining a car-sharing service like Zipcar (**www.zipcar.com**) and Flexcar (**www.flexcar.com**). These are great alternatives to owning your own wheels.

• Make it a policy to encourage telecommuting (a nice perk that's also good for the planet!) and make it easy for employees to take alternative modes of transportation by subsidizing commuter checks, offering bike parking, or organizing a carpool board.

### 10. CREATE A HEALTHY OFFICE ENVIRONMENT

• Make it a habit to use nontoxic cleaning products. Brighten up your cubicle with plants, which absorb indoor pollution.

• Make it a policy to buy furniture, carpeting, and paint that are free of volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and won't off-gas toxic chemicals.

*— Jennifer Hattam*

**These tips originally appeared on "The Green Life," a Sierra Club weblog of ideas for living well and doing good. Visit www.sierraclub.org/greenlife for more.**