

ENERGY MATTERS

Five Ways Consumers Can Make An Earth-Friendly Difference

(NAPSA)—Making a difference in protecting the environment can be easier than you think.

The decisions consumers make every day can encourage the development of new power sources, save natural resources and help ensure that the quality of the environment is preserved.

Before the 1900s, the U.S. relied almost entirely on renewable energy resources. Today, our economy is dominated by the use of fossil fuels, but there are other renewable options to consider:

1. Buy a hybrid vehicle:

As the country moves toward vehicles that run on renewable fuels, it's also important to reduce the amount of fuel used by vehicles. Hybrid electric vehicles are powered by both an engine and an electric motor and include a battery pack to provide power during normal driving conditions.

DaimlerChrysler and Toyota are among automakers developing and selling hybrid electric vehicles.

2. Travel by buses powered by alternative fuels (AFBs):

More and more communities and schools are providing a cleaner and healthier route to school with alternative fuel buses. These buses greatly reduce emissions and in some cases have lower fuel and maintenance costs than buses run entirely on petroleum fuels.



Terrence Brand installs solar panels donated by Green Mountain Energy Company on the first Houston Habitat for Humanity home equipped with a solar array, launching an ongoing partnership to raise awareness of renewable energy.

3. Use the sun for heat and light:

Passive and active solar thermal energy systems make a valuable contribution to heating homes and businesses throughout the nation. The sun is the cleanest energy source for heating and lighting. Everyone uses solar energy to some extent. Just opening your drapes during the day is one way of using the abundant energy of the sun.

4. Investigate the use of geothermal heat pumps:

One of the most energy-efficient options for heating and cooling your home draws on another form of renewable energy—geothermal energy—or heat from the

earth. Geothermal heat pumps are at least three times more efficient than the most energy efficient furnaces on the market today.

5. Purchase green power:

The purchase of green power (electricity generated from renewable energy sources) has shown to be one of the most cost-effective ways of reducing greenhouse gas emissions and supporting renewable energy projects. In various parts of the country, consumers have the opportunity to choose the source of the power that is delivered to their home or business—including energy derived from renewable sources.

Renewable energy generally refers to electricity supplied from renewable energy sources such as wind and solar power (energy supplied by the sun), geothermal (energy created from the extreme heat contained in liquid rock—called magma—from Earth's core), hydropower (energy derived from the movement of water as it flows downstream) and various forms of biomass (fuel from sources such as trees, wood and agricultural waste).

One company helping many Americans "buy green" is the Green Mountain Energy Company. About 600,000 consumers have chosen this less polluting electricity.

You can learn more online at www.greenmountain.com.