



## What Does 'Carbon Neutral' Mean?

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Becoming 'carbon neutral' means that you have neutralized the effect of your personal greenhouse gas emissions, so that your personal and household activities no longer contribute to the dangers of global warming.

On average, 25% of emissions come from our personal activities. The rest comes from industry, commerce, agriculture, and so on. In striving to reduce your personal emissions, becoming carbon neutral at the household level is one way to exercise this responsibility.

So, what can an individual household do to cut their emissions?

Free ways to save energy:

- Only use the heat and light appliances you really need - don't leave TVs or videos on standby.
- Also switch off your computer screen when it's not being used! and don't forget the peripherals! your printer uses a lot of electricity if left on when you are not using it.

Transformers draw electricity even when the appliance they power is not being used. So plug transformers into a power strip and turn the strip off between uses.

- Try turning your heating thermostat down by 1°. You will probably hardly notice the difference and it will save dollars. Keep furniture away from radiators, the foam in an upholstered chair is a very effective heat insulator!
- When cooking choose the right pan size for the food, cut food into smaller pieces and put lids on pans the food will cook a lot faster. If you are defrosting food, or just warming things up, then microwave ovens are ideal as they use much less electricity than conventional ovens.
- Regularly defrost your freezer and try to keep it packed full to avoid wasting energy. Use plastic containers of ice to fill extra space in your freezer. This not only keeps your energy use low but should

the electricity go off it keeps your food from thawing.

You should also check the seals on your fridge/freezer to ensure no warm air is getting in - the seals should be tight enough to hold a piece of paper securely when closed.

When shopping buy foods that are local to save on the trucking. This is a great time of year to shop at your local farmer's market. Stock up your freezer while the produce is abundant and locally available.

When washing up use the dishwasher if you have one. Studies have shown that you will use less energy using a dishwasher than washing by hand.

- Try to have full loads when using the washing machine and use cold water. With today's detergents this temperature is more than adequate to clean clothes and will save you up to three quarters of the cost of the hot cycle. You don't need to have your water heated to a scalding temperature either, for most people setting the thermostat to 140°F is quite adequate.
- The sun is the most readily available source of heat there is - and the cheapest! Avoid using tumble driers to dry your clothes; on nice sunny days clothes can be dried outside.

Use energy saving light bulbs (CFLs) in areas where lights are left on for long periods of time. They use about a quarter of the electricity and last eight times longer.

If you have to replace an appliance look for the energy star rating. If you have been thinking about that new refrigerator...do it now and save some energy.

Try one of these calculators to see how your household emissions measure up.

Calculators:

<http://www.maine.greenpower.org/calculator>  
<http://www.carboncounter.org>

Find an Energy-Saving Light Bulb:

<http://www.environmentaldefense.org/page.cfm?tagID=632&campaign=mts>