

## Energy Efficiency - How to Make It Happen at Your Home or Office Conservation Corner – November 2015

The term energy efficiency has long been advocated as a tool to save money and help the planet. While that has been and continues to be a true statement, exactly what it means, how impactful it is and how someone can grab a hold and take advantage of this tool can often get lost in the barrage of information people process every day.

**What is energy efficiency?** In simplest terms, it means using less energy (electricity and natural gas) to accomplish the same thing. It is conserving energy without “doing without,” but instead using it better.

**How does it help?** Energy efficiency at home helps by using less energy to do the same function, which saves money each month when you receive your bill. Energy efficiency also slows down (and potentially stops) the need to create more electricity which is more expensive and has long lasting environmental impacts. Because of this, the energy industry categorizes efficiency as a production source.

Nationally, energy efficiency accounts for one percent of all electric production. But in the Pacific Northwest, due to a long history of commitment to energy efficiency, it accounts for twelve percent of all electric production. So, every kilowatt of electricity saved, is a kilowatt that doesn't need to be created and distributed across the electrical grid.

**How to get started?** Energy efficiency is a combination of education, changes in habits and investments in the equipment and systems that use energy as part of your day to day life.

Education As your local electric utility company, the City of Ashland is a partner in helping you go as far as you want in becoming more energy efficient. Aside from a wide array of rebate and incentive programs ([www.ashland.or.us/conserves](http://www.ashland.or.us/conserves)), the City has staff dedicated to helping you understand how energy is used in your home or office and can assist you in figuring out ways to be more energy efficient regardless of whether or not you are interested in making a financial investment in your home or office.

If you want to get started on this on your own, the City has partnered with Clean Energy Works (soon to be called Enhabit) to provide all City utility customers with an online tool that steps you through a simple question and answer quiz about your home and gives you a report to help zero in on places to make efficiency improvements. Check out this new tool at [www.ashland.or.us/energyquiz](http://www.ashland.or.us/energyquiz).

If you want to dig even deeper into understand exactly how your home functions and what can be done to improve it, the City and Clean Energy Works (Enhabit) have a pilot project starting in November for free and low cost Energy Performance Scores (EPS). An EPS involves an on-site evaluation and 100 point checklist that results in a preliminary energy score for the home, similar to a miles per gallon (MPG) for vehicles. The score is specific to your home and its equipment and gives you a very clear indication of what could be done to improve the score and improve the energy efficiency of your home. To get on the project interest list, go to [www.cewo.org/Ashland-EPS](http://www.cewo.org/Ashland-EPS)

Habits & Behavior There are many small changes to your daily habits and behavior that can have a big impact on energy efficiency. Things like when window coverings are opened and closed, the temperature settings on thermostats, right and wrong times to “flush” the air from

your home and more. The City has a list of tips and tricks for both summer and winter use of electricity. Visit [www.ashland.or.us/energytips](http://www.ashland.or.us/energytips) for more information.

Equipment Upgrades and Home Improvements While solar panels have come down in price and are more popular and affordable than ever (The City has great incentive programs for this also), energy efficiency investments typically have a better “bang for the buck” in terms of a quicker return on investment. The City has a variety of residential and commercial incentive programs for replacing equipment with high efficiency options. Technology advancements in energy efficiency space heating, cooling, lighting, and water heating have opened up many new options and programs to residents looking to make efficiency improvements.

Check out the local resources available to Ashland residents, take the quiz, call the City energy staff, ask questions and see how you can impact your electric bill, your community and beyond by using every kilowatt of electricity as wisely as possible.

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