

Ripple Effect #79

Many of us spend a third of our day at the office -- and for some that's not counting the commute. Conservation International has these energy-saving tips in the workplace to reduce stress on ourselves and on the planet.

- 1. Turn off the lights.** Remember to hit the switch on your way out for your lunch break. The energy savings from 10 million employees turning off unneeded lights for 30 minutes a day is enough to illuminate 50 million square feet of office space.
- 2. Get off mailing lists.** The last thing you need is another office supply catalog or credit card offer on your desk. Before tossing out junk mail, call the company's toll-free service number and ask that your name be removed from the mailing list. Have online retailers e-mail you instead. Almost half of all catalogs are never opened, yet nearly 62 million trees are destroyed and 28 billion gallons of water are used to produce them every year.
- 3. Put your monitor to sleep.** A computer screen saver is not at all designed for energy efficiency. It's intended to save your screen from "burn in," not to save energy. Because monitors are responsible for more than one-third of a computer's energy consumption -- even with screen savers -- the best way to conserve energy is to set the monitor to sleep or power off when you're away for an extended period. If you're gone for 5-10 minutes, enjoy a screen saver. Any longer than that, put the monitor to sleep.
- 4. Make your printer's toner last.** When printing rough drafts or documents for internal purposes, change the printer's settings to economy mode and avoid color if possible. Econo-mode uses up to 50 percent less toner and prints twice as many pages as other higher quality settings.
- 5. Recycle and reuse paper.** Americans toss out about 35 million tons of paper each year. Buck the trend and start recycling -- not only standard white printer paper, but all of the magazines, manila folders, and colored post-it notes that decorate your space. If it tears, it can be recycled. Recycled paper manufacturing generates 74 percent less air pollution, and saves trees, water, and energy. To salvage papers that are printed on one side only, flip them over and use for incoming faxes.
- 6. Purchase 100 percent post-consumer waste, chlorine-free paper.** Take note when buying paper -- the higher the percentage of post-consumer waste, the larger the amount of recycled material is contained in the paper stock. This means that 100 percent post-consumer waste paper is made entirely from recycled products. Also, chlorine used for bleaching is one of the biggest polluters in the paper-making process. Choose non-chlorinated paper, which has the same quality as the bleached variety.
- 7. Recycle and reuse office supplies.** Washing and reusing the plastic dishes and cutlery you get with take-away food is an easy way to cut down on waste at work. Better yet, pack your own lunch in reusable containers. Skip the paper (or worse, Styrofoam) cups

and refill your travel mug at the nearby coffee shop instead. Besides aluminum cans and glass bottles, there are many other supplies stashed in and around your desk that are recyclable, such as batteries, printer cartridges, DVDs, CDs, and more.

If we each make small changes in our work habits, we can make a big difference in taking care of our natural resources.

Until the next Ripple Effect,

The Red River Basin Commission (RRBC)

The RRBC is a grassroots organization that is a chartered not-for-profit corporation under the provisions of Manitoba, North Dakota, Minnesota, and South Dakota law. Our offices in Moorhead, MN and Winnipeg, MB can be reached at 218-291-0422 and 204-982-7254, or you can check out our website at www.redriverbasincommission.org.

