

Home Energy Management

by Elizabeth White

Slamming the door on SSI greenhouse gases

Any home can become more energy-efficient, even the draftiest Salt Spring character cottage. There is no need to burn six cords of air-polluting wood each winter, or to shiver in the damp. How best to cut energy use and improve comfort depends on your preferences and pocketbook; there are many good products and technologies available. Here are some tips:

No cost / low cost measures:

- Heat and light only the rooms you are in; install a programmable thermostat to turn down the heat each night; it may be more reliable than your memory!
- Burn dry wood only, seasoned under cover at least one year. Burn short, hot fires to reduce air pollution. In BC, electric heat is greener than wood heat.
- If the heat is on, keep doors and windows shut.
- Install shrink-wrap plastic over single-glazed windows.
- A drafty house does not ensure good indoor air quality. Fix drafts by caulking and / or weather-stripping windows, doors, attic hatch, baseboards, around trim, and seal off any openings to unheated space.
- Install low-flow showerheads and faucet aerators to reduce hot water use, do laundry in cold water, dry clothes outside in summer.
- Use a power bar for electronic equipment, and switch off at the bar to avoid 'ghost loads'.

When buying replacements:

- Switch to compact fluorescent CFL light bulbs.
- Buy Energy Star windows, equipment, and appliances.
- If you have a forced air heating system, consider adding an Energy Star air source heat pump, it is as efficient as a ground source heat pump and a fraction of the cost.

When renovating:

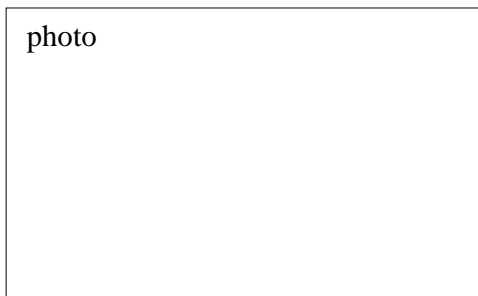
- Get an EnerGuide home energy analysis first to find out where heat is being lost and what the best upgrade options are for your home.
- Mold is unhealthy and is a sign of moisture problems; fix moisture problems first.
- Add insulation—most older homes are not insulated to current Building Code standards. 12" insulation in attics, 6" in walls and foundation are minimum levels.
- A heat recovery ventilator (HRV) provides good indoor air quality. Alternatively, use an Energy Star bathroom exhaust fan to increase ventilation.

Did you know?

- The average house on Salt Spring uses about 16,800 kWh of electricity per year.
- If we are to meet Salt Spring Energy Strategy targets, we each need to reduce our energy consumption by about 23% by 2012.
- Wood stoves and fireplaces produce over 100 pollutants, including fine particulates and VOCs.
- CSA or EPA certified wood stoves emit 80-95 percent fewer particulates, and are up to 20 per cent more fuel-efficient than conventional models.

Walking the Talk

Local hero—Andrew Haigh



Salt Spring Books owner Andrew Haigh, with his partner Adina and their two young children, are walking the talk big-time. They are building their super energy-efficient off-grid house with natural materials—including straw and earth plaster. Their house is a regular feature of the annual Salt Spring Ecohome Tour and a full description of the features can be found on the website: www.saltspringenergystrategy.org

Wanting to do more to reduce GHG emissions, Andrew got together with the Earth Festival Society to create the Energy Circles project, and has purchased a dozen watt meters, available on loan for a toonie from the book store to anyone who wants to check out how much energy their appliances are using. Thank you Andrew!

Take the Challenge

How much energy can you save at home? Set a target and see if you can meet it.

Lifestyle and low-cost improvements can usually provide up to 10% savings.

Renovations provide the opportunity to save more—up to 30% or more.

If you are building new, the sky's the limit, go for a zero energy home and see how close you can get!

Tools and resources

Energy circles: form or join a group and have fun saving energy. More info at: www.saltspringenergystrategy.org or from Salt Spring Books.

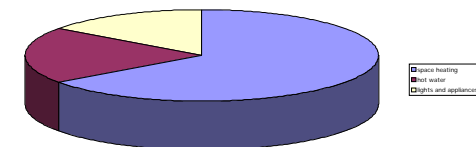
Home energy assessments, EcoEnergy home retrofit grants, and new home rating info from: City Green 1-866-381-9995 www.citygreen.ca

BC Hydro 'analyze my home' at www.bchydro.com

Smart tool: Blueline PowerCost Monitor tells you how much electricity you are using.

Typical household energy use:

Lights & appliances 15%
Hot water 20%
Space heating 65%



for more information and links, see the Earth Festival Society website:

www.saltspringenergystrategy.org