

Saving Energy

Submitted by Alexis Baker, Environmental Program Coordinator

While there are several ways to reduce energy usage, it is best to first look at simple solutions before embarking on large scale projects. For example, did you know that 50% of the energy lost in your home may be through the duct system? It may be worthwhile to hire a professional to check ducts. If you plan on sealing them yourself, remember, though the name may be misleading, duct tape does not make good duct sealant. Use duct mastic, which never fully hardens and can expand and contract with the duct, or mesh tape. If you are in the process of building a new home, make sure that insulation is properly installed, especially in the attic. If insulation has a void and is not fully touching all sides of the wall, then you are not getting the full benefit of the R-value or thermal resistance. Somewhere between 10-50% of energy is lost through improper insulation. Look for other gaps by running your hand along the windows and doors. If you feel hot or cold air seeping in, you have a void that needs to be sealed. On average, the number of voids, where there are air leaks or improper insulation, is equivalent to having a door or large window open all the time!

Other ways of saving energy is to switch incandescent light bulbs for compact florescent lights (CFLs), which use 75% less energy than regular light bulbs. Turn your thermostat up to 78 degrees. Also, consider using Energy Star products. Energy Star is a government backed program which ensures that the products you are buying are the most energy efficient. Rebates may exist for certain Energy Star products. You can find these by going to www.energystar.gov.

Since we are discussing energy, I would like to mention that Henderson County is currently participating in the "Change the World" National Campaign. Participating counties have the chance to win a \$5,000 grant from Wal-mart which can be used towards installing CFLs, properly sealing windows and doors, or other measures to improve energy efficiency in Henderson County facilities. The money saved in energy costs could go to other programs to improve our community. You can help Henderson County win this grant by going to www.greencounties.org/changetheworld and pledging to find ways to make your home more efficient. The "Change the World" Campaign runs from July 1 until November 30, 2009.

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