



Resource Guide

Energy Efficiency and Conservation



What is Energy Efficiency & Why Care About It?

A building achieves energy efficiency by reducing the energy load from heating, cooling, appliances, and electronics. Energy efficiency is achieved by having a well-insulated and well air-sealed structure, coupled with high-efficiency mechanical equipment, appliance and electronics. Energy efficiency is one of the easiest and most cost-effective ways to:

- Reduce energy costs for consumers
- Improve the competitiveness of businesses
- Combat climate change
- Clean the air we breathe

While new technologies and renewable energy sources are gaining in popularity, energy efficiency remains the most cost-effective way to cut energy use. Most organizations can achieve annual energy savings of 2 to 10 percent through better energy management. The three steps to improving your energy efficiency are:

- Track energy usage
- Reduce your energy usage
- Procure renewable energy

Additionally, customers and existing or potential employees are increasingly concerned with the social and environmental impact of companies. Reducing a company's energy footprint provides a marketing opportunity to promote externally and celebrate internally.

Tracking Energy Usage: The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) found that organizations that regularly measure and track their energy performance achieve greater energy savings than organizations that don't. Understanding past and current energy use is how many organizations identify opportunities to improve energy performance and gain financial benefits. Rather than simply paying an energy bill every month, review it and monitor your ongoing energy reduction efforts. Schedule an energy assessment and consider enrolling in the Energy Star Portfolio Manager program.

Reducing Energy Usage: No matter what their role or position, everyone can pitch in to save energy. Educate and encourage employees to be energy-conscious and offer ideas about how to save energy. Employee buy-in and involvement can make or break a company's efforts to conserve energy. Email employees, make an announcement at the next staff meeting, and post signs in high visibility areas like breakrooms, elevators, and lobbies.

Procuring Renewable Energy: After addressing energy-efficiency opportunities available in a facility consider renewable energy. Renewable energy refers to electricity supplied from energy sources, such as wind, solar, geothermal, hydro, and biomass. If interested in installing renewable energy equipment in a facility, the state may provide incentives to "buy-down" the cost.

Of course, not every small business can install renewable energy technology at their facility. Fortunately, companies can often buy green power for their facility directly from many utilities at a slightly higher cost than regular electricity. If your utility company does not offer green power options, the company may be able to switch providers or participate by purchasing renewable energy certificates. Renewable energy certificates (often referred to as REC's or green tags) document the purchase of renewable energy.

No or Low-Cost Energy Conservation Tips for Businesses

1. Designate a “Green Team” to be responsible for and promote good energy practices for the organization. The team can work with management to facilitate energy saving ideas and strategies.
2. Get an energy assessment to identify energy saving opportunities as well as high –efficiency equipment incentives and financing options. Visit the [National Grid](#) web site for more information.
3. Replace incandescent light bulbs with compact fluorescent or LED bulbs.
4. Purchase ENERGY STAR office equipment. Many energy providers operate programs or provide incentives to encourage businesses to initiate energy efficient upgrades. Ask the company’s energy provider if they have such a program. Not only will you reduce your energy utilization, but you’ll likely cut costs in the process.
5. Turn off lights and equipment when not in use. Use the ENERGY STAR power management settings on computers and monitors so they go into power saving mode when not in use.
6. Use natural light if available to illuminate workspaces.
7. Install occupancy sensors to automatically turn off lights.
8. Control direct sunlight through windows with screens or film.
9. Regularly change HVAC filters and tune- up HVAC units (clean and check refrigerant charge)
10. Install programmable thermostats.

Resources

- [Office of Energy Resources](#) (OER) is Rhode Island’s lead state agency on energy policy and programs.
- Visit National Grid’s Energy Efficiency website (www.ngrid.com/save) and click on Rhode Island.
- Visit the [National Grid](#) Energy Innovation Hub (1 La Salle Square, Providence) to learn about statewide energy infrastructure, available energy options and incentives, and how your choices affect your energy bills and the environment.
- EPA’s [Energy Star Portfolio Manager](#) provides energy and water monitoring programs as well as tools for setting energy goals.
- [Empower RI](#) is a free resource from the Rhode Island Division of Public Utilities and Carriers that helps businesses and homeowners compare options and make informed power supply choices.
- Nonprofit organization [People’s Power and Light](#) offers energy-related assistance and programming on heating oil, green power, and energy efficiency.
- [The EPA’s ENERGY STAR Portfolio Manager](#) is an online tool to help track energy-related data, establish baseline information, benchmark facilities against each other or industry standards, analyze energy use patterns and trends, and prioritize areas for improvement.
- [The EPA’s Green Power Partnership](#) encourages organizations to use green power to reduce the environmental impacts associated with conventional electricity. In return for technical assistance and recognition, partners commit to use green power for all or a portion of their electricity consumption.
- [New Buildings Institute](#) works to improve the energy performance of commercial buildings.
- [Northeast Energy Efficiency Partnerships \(NEEP\)](#) supports state efficiency policies and programs.
- [Northeast Sustainable Energy Association \(NESEA\)](#) offers a variety of programming and resources related to sustainable energy practices.

Associated Resource Guides

- Accredited Green Buildings & Working with Landlords
- Recycling Programs



[Best for Rhode Island](#) is an initiative of [Social Enterprise Greenhouse](#) in partnership with business and community organizations across the state.