

Five high-impact actions You can take to help the environment.

Fix your water leaks

The average home leaks more than 10,000 gallons of clean water each year through leaky pipes, toilets, showerheads and other fixtures. That's equal to the water needed to wash 270 loads of laundry. Toilets are especially leak-prone (20% of all toilets leak), but because they are often silent, these leaks can go unnoticed. Learn more on how to fix leaks and save water: Is your toilet taking a leak?

Buy less stuff

Consumer goods that are cheaper to throw away than to repair have become common. And the amount of goods that we purchase, use, and then throw away has risen over time. This affects the environment in lots of negative ways. Here are some questions to ask yourself before heading to the store or the internet to shop:

- Do I truly need this (*new phone or gadget, clothing item, other consumer product*) or can I get by without it?
- Can I borrow, rent, or trade for this item?
- If I really need to buy it, can I get it second-hand?
- If I do buy new, is there a product with a Lifetime Warranty?

Slay your energy vampires

Do you leave your phone or laptop chargers, DVD player, video game console, or other electronic devices plugged in when you're not using them? If so, you likely have energy vampires lurking in your home. Energy vampires are big energy wasters! They can account for 10% or more of a home's electric use, which makes them expensive to own.

Energy vampires are electrical items that continue to use electricity even when turned off — things that draw power when in standby mode and/or have a display light.

Slay these vampires by unplugging them when not in use. Installing advanced power strips can also help.

Be an eco-driver

Sometimes it's not what we drive but *how* we drive that determines how much carbon and other emissions our vehicles generate. In 2016, consider using these eco-driving habits when you're behind the wheel.

- Speed up and slow down smoothly.
- Drive the speed limit. (The EPA estimates a 10-15% improvement in gas mileage by driving 55 mph instead of 65 mph)
- Keeping tires properly inflated.
- Maintain a steady speed.
- Avoid excess idling.

Water a tree

The ground may be covered in snow, but it's not too early to think of warmer days ahead. Did you know that trees help us to save water and energy? Trees keep us cooler during the summer, improve water quality, and reduce air pollutants, among many other benefits.

If you have trees in your landscape or on your boulevard, one of the best things you can do is to water them. Newly planted trees especially need watering for the first 3-5 years after planting. Mature trees need extra water during periods of drought.

