

## Going Solar/Going Green

I have been receiving an increasing number of inquiries about solar power installations in the past few months. Although this is encouraging, and I always like seeing PV panels on rooftops when I am out and about, I feel like not enough attention is being paid to addressing the bigger problem.

In this country, we consume a lot of energy to maintain our lifestyles. Nearly every activity in your life requires an energy input of one form or another. I think that photovoltaic solar panels are a great and underutilized technology that will be important in any transition from depending on coal and natural gas for electricity. However, I think that there are much much cheaper alternatives to reducing your fossil fuel based electricity usage. So I have put together a list of items and ideas that may get you more bang for your buck or juice for your buck - whatever.

1. Compact Florescent Light Bulbs - They use about 1/3 of the electricity of an incandescent bulb and are supposed to last longer. I have my doubts about the longevity, but they certainly are more efficient. Also, in the past few years they have become seemingly more durable.
2. Re-seal your refrigerator/freezer - You may not need this done, but you may be surprised to find out how much cold air (and energy) can leak out of poorly sealed units. Re-sealing is fairly simple and you can find out more about it online .
3. Wash your dishes by hand - You remember, how they used to do it back in the old days? Dishwashers are such a waste of energy. Stop using them and save a few bucks (and water) in the process.
4. Find alternatives to air conditioning - Some days there is nothing better than an air conditioned home. But other days you may be able get away with a ceiling fan and dehumidifier in your home. Find out more about "evaporative cooling" online .
5. Think about switching from a tank water heater (using gas or electric) to a solar water heater or a tankless water heater.
6. Install timer switches on high traffic switches in your home (hallways and bathrooms). This way the light won't stay on as long as they used to.
7. Install (and learn how to properly operate) a timed thermostat for your home's HVAC system.
8. Turn off displays on appliances. You don't need that many clocks in your kitchen and living room anyway.
9. Put electronics on switched power strips and switch them off when you don't need them. Even when electrical appliances are not on, they are still pulling energy.
10. Think about adding natural light to high traffic areas in your home. Coincidentally, Sun In could help you out with this one.