

Kitchen and Laundry: Greening Your Chores



Seven energy-efficient changes for your home and housework



- Do your laundry and run your dishwasher at “off-peak” times
- Air-dry your dishes instead of running the dishwasher’s “heated dry” cycle
- Wash your clothes in cold water
- Install a clothesline for warm, dry weather and/or share one with your neighbors
- Keep cold water in the fridge and use ice cube trays, instead of the water & ice functions
- Replace older appliances with EnergyStar electric models—yours, or your tenants’
- Ask your representatives and state agencies for a discount for off-peak electricity

Refrigerators save lives—people used to die of food poisoning much more frequently—and dishwashers and laundry machines save the time and sanity of whoever does the housework. But when we use them inefficiently, we’re outsourcing that suffering to people elsewhere and to future generations. These actions do involve some time and work, but you’ll reduce your energy bill and our state’s fossil fuel responsibility.

Household action: Replace your older home appliances—including your refrigerator—with electric models that are Energy Star rated. While it may cost a little more up front, you will see savings as well as helping the climate. Watch your electric bill for offers from National Grid to buy up your old inefficient appliances, and offering discounts on the purchase of certain energy efficient appliances (you can also look here). When it’s time to replace your gas stove, replace it with an electric one: natural gas is itself a fossil fuel, and its production, transport and use all create greenhouse gas emissions.

“Off-peak” times for using electricity usually means evening hours after statewide or regional demand for electricity has declined. We don’t need to build additional generating facilities if we use wisely the supply we already have. If you use Twitter, the Twitter account @ShaveThePeak will alert you to peak times when it’s good to turn your appliances off or wait to use them. Household and community actions can complement each other for the most effective and efficient use of resources.

Community action: Gather your neighbors for a call-in or write-in day to your Rhode Island representatives and senators, and the RI Public Utilities Commission, asking them to adopt rates that give a discount for off-peak electricity use. Massachusetts already does this, and you can refer to their program in your call or letter.