



Efficiency is Key to Cutting Carbon

Letter to the Editor

January 5, 2008

Paul Adams' article "Reality shorts out electricity goal" (Dec. 28) correctly highlights the potential of energy efficiency to lower household bills. His focus, however, on whether Maryland can meet Gov. Martin O'Malley's goal of reducing consumption 15 percent by 2015 overlooks Maryland's more fundamental electricity challenges.

Maryland continues to consume far more electricity than it generates, resulting in high prices and the possibility of summer shortages as soon as 2011.

Energy efficiency is a critical component of any solution to bring our bills down and keep our lights on.

Simply put, the cheapest kilowatt is the one not needed.

Gov. O'Malley's EmPower Maryland goal is ambitious but achievable.

Californians, for example, use roughly 42 percent less electricity per capita than Marylanders. And a recent report ranked Maryland's utilities 47th out of those in the 50 states in the amount they invest per customer in energy efficiency.

The solution is as close as our local hardware stores: Programmable thermostats, Energy Star appliances, and compact fluorescent light bulbs all help reduce energy consumption.

With appropriate incentives, Marylanders can make up-front energy-efficiency investments that will pay for themselves several times over in years to come.

And achieving the EmPower Maryland goal would avoid the use of 25 billion kilowatt-hours of electricity, which is roughly the output of two large fossil-fuel power plants, and eliminate the emission of 35 billion pounds of CO₂, which is equivalent to taking 3 million cars off the road.

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“Americans spend more than \$160 billion a year to heat, cool, light, and live in our homes. This energy represents about 21 percent of the national total and includes significant demand for electricity and natural gas. Many households could save 20-30 percent on their household energy bills by implementing energy efficiency improvements.”

(Source: EnergySavers.gov)

The biggest portion of our home energy use goes to heating and cooling our homes (on average 44% of a home’s energy use), followed by supplying hot water (14%), and then the refrigerator (9%). The remaining 33% is everything else – lights, computers, TV’s, cooking, other appliances, etc. (Source: U.S. Department of Energy)

For most Americans, home energy use is responsible for the largest portion of our individual impacts on global warming, adding more greenhouse gases to the environment than any traveling we do including by car and by air. Therefore this is where we should concentrate our efforts for reduction.

The good news is there are many relatively easy and cost effective energy improvements that can help this situation. By performing the improvements outlined in a TerraLogos Home Energy Report[®], the homeowner can easily reduce home energy use by 30% to 50%. This will save them money and also reduce their impact on the environment.

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