

## WHAT CAN I DO TO REDUCE AIR POLLUTION?

Individual actions are an important part of reducing all kinds of air quality problems — from neighbourhood smoke to global atmospheric degradation. There is so much we can do to become part of the environmental solution. Here are some suggestions:



### GETTING AROUND

- Break the automobile addiction!
- Use public transit or join a carpool.
- Ride your bike or use your feet.
- Create a walking school bus: a group of children walking to school with one or more adults.
- Combine errands to save gas and reduce exhaust.
- Don't idle. If you're going to be stopped for more than 60 seconds – except in traffic – turn your engine off. Warm up a vehicle by driving slowly for the first five kilometres or so. To find out more, visit the Idle-Free Zone.
- Switch to an electric or hybrid.
- Slow down when you drive. You'll use less gas and thereby produce less pollution.
- Drive slowly on unpaved roads and other dirt surfaces so you don't kick up dust.
- Prevent gas leaks and evaporation (VOCs) by resisting the temptation to overfill your gas tank.
- Keep your vehicle engine in top condition with a regular tune-up.
- Use radial tires to cut down on tire drag and save gas.
- Inflate your tires to the manufacturer's recommended to save up to 10% on fuel consumption.
- Consider joining a car-sharing co-operative.
- Looking for a new vehicle? Go for a smaller, fuel-efficient model with low emissions.
- Retire old vehicles with the BC Scrap-It Program.



### AT HOME

- Conserve energy. A family of four is responsible for releasing 20 tonnes of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere, each year.
- Put on a sweater. Most of our energy to heat our homes comes from the burning of fossil fuels (oil, gas and coal).
- Seal air leaks to prevent heat escaping from your home (and money from your wallet). An energy-efficient house that traps passive solar energy and retains it by minimizing air leaks can reduce annual energy consumption by over half that of a conventional home. This can create substantial benefits for both the atmosphere and your energy bills.
- Set your thermostat no higher than 20°C during the day, and turn it down when out or asleep.
- Have your furnace serviced regularly to ensure efficient operation.
- Keep your water heater at 50°C, and use cold water whenever possible.
- To keep your home warm in winter and cool in summer, follow these tips:
  - Insulate your home effectively and install a vapour barrier.
  - Caulk or weather strip cracks and holes, as well as windows and doors.
  - Install windows that are efficient at preventing heat loss. Plastic insulating sheets that can be attached to window frames are also effective heat savers.
  - Close heating vents and doors to rooms you aren't using.
  - Plant a deciduous tree on the south side of your home to keep out the sun in summer and let in the warmth during winter.
  - Convert to cleaner, more efficient fuels. Natural gas is an interim solution. While it is more efficient than oil and creates fewer emissions, gas is still a fossil fuel and releases large quantities of carbon dioxide and other pollutants.
  - Solar energy is another viable option that is increasingly proving cost effective.

#### SOURCES

<http://www.bcairquality.ca/101/individual-air-quality.html>



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### GREEN LIFESTYLE

- Avoid garden tools that run on gasoline. The engine in a gas-powered lawn mower produces eight times the pollution that a car engine does. The best option is human energy: push a hand mower, and use a rake instead of a leaf blower.
- Paint with water-based (latex) paint rather than the oil-based variety. Oil-based paint contains three to five times more toxic solvents than latex.
- Close paint cans tightly. An open 4.5 litre can of paint emits up to a kilogram of VOCs by the time all the paint has dried up.
- Steer clear of aerosol cans containing products such as paint, deodorant and hair spray. The gases that make the product shoot out contribute to smog.
- Buy products with less packaging. It takes a lot of energy to make packaging, and VOCs are generated during the printing process.
- Turn off the lights when you don't need them.
- Use energy-efficient light bulbs. If every B.C. household replaced two regular (incandescent) light bulbs with compact fluorescent bulbs, the energy saved could power 30,000 homes.
- Conserve water: A leaky hot water tap can waste up to 13,000 litres of water a year. If the faucets are fixed, they'll save energy used to heat the water in the hot water tank.
- Hang clothes out to dry instead of using a dryer, when you can.
- Wash your clothes in cold water.
- Choose EnergyStar when buying a new washer or dryer.
- Turn off your computer and your television when they're not in use.
- Program your computer to power down into sleep mode when you're not on it.
- Plant a tree or garden at home or school. Trees and plants absorb carbon dioxide, a powerful greenhouse gas, and convert it to oxygen, which we need to breathe. They are also natural air filters, breaking down pollutants and reducing dust.
- Be an environmentally friendly shopper. Buy products that don't have a lot of packaging and can be recycled.
- Buy local products. The average meal travels 2,500 km to our plate. To get there, the elements of the meal probably traveled by fossil-fuel-based transportation, such as motor vehicles, planes, trains and marine vessels. When we buy local products, we cut down the travel time of that product, which helps to decrease air pollution.



### WHEN THERE'S FIRE, THERE'S SMOKE

- Compost your garden left overs.
- Recycle waste and building materials whenever possible (e.g. plastics, tires, wood, paper and cardboard). These can release very toxic substances when they are burned. Reduce your waste by avoiding over-packaging.
- When you burn wood, make sure the combustion is efficient, releasing the least possible amount of smoke:
- Wet or green wood produces a lot of smoke. Wood should be properly seasoned in a dry place for at least eight months.
- The moisture content of the wood should be 20% or less. Ask for the moisture content of the wood to your firewood vendor/distributor before you buy! Avoid wood that is treated, painted, or laden with salt from exposure to sea water.
- Buy an efficient, EPA certified wood stove that's just the right size for your home. Obtain a proper building permit for legal installation and operate it correctly. Overloading your stove or starving the fire of air are both harmful. Check [Wood Heating Best Practices](#)
- Burn only when the smoke will dissipate from the area. Poor air quality conditions happen when: The [venting index](#) in the Okanagan is less than 34 and/or [Particulate matter](#) (PM2.5-24hr) is 15 µg/m3 or greater.
- Open Burning within the Regional District, requires a valid permit from the local fire department and is only allowed between October 1 and April 30. Be aware of the "[no-burn](#)" period in your community, and don't bend the rules!

#### SOURCES

<http://www.bc.airquality.ca/101/individual-air-quality.html>

## WHAT CAN I DO TO REDUCE AIR POLLUTION?



### EXTEND YOUR COMMITMENT TO COMMUNITY ACTION

- Spread the news! Tell your friends and neighbours how they can help protect the environment. Your own example and gentle persuasion can really count.
- Whenever you shop, make choices for the environment. Only buy what you truly need. When you buy, select environmentally friendly products. If you can't find any, encourage retailers to stock them and get rid of more harmful products.
- Ask your employer to consider starting a carpool and switching to alternative work patterns — for example, compressed work weeks and working at home (telecommuting). Your workplace could also develop a "work-bike policy," in which bikes are provided at the office for business travel. See The Ministry of Environment's Work-Bike Policy: Use of Bicycles for Business Travel.
- Support urban planning that lowers automobile use. Options include:
  - promoting bicycle use and bike paths
  - improving public transit systems
  - developing vehicle-free areas.

For more information, please visit:  
[www.rdco.com/airquality](http://www.rdco.com/airquality)

#### SOURCES

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