

# For Earth Day, turn off the faucet and the ignition

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Clouds over Australia are shown. Credit: NASA

To mark Earth Day on Wednesday, experts suggest you consider making lifestyle changes that will reduce your impact on the planet.

Reducing water usage and car travel are good places to start, researchers at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign suggest.

Water conservation is crucial, and not just in the parched West. Thirty-six states are expected to have [water shortages](#) by 2016, according to a

university news release.

The average American family of four uses more than 400 gallons of water a day, the Environmental Protection Agency says. Take shorter showers and turn off the water while brushing your teeth, experts advise.

Transportation accounts for about one-third of the average American's contribution to climate change. Americans use about 385 million gallons of gasoline every day, or more than a gallon for every person, the experts said.

Instead of using your car, try walking or cycling or use public transit, they suggest. When using your car, combine errands into a single trip. Also, keep up with scheduled maintenance on your car.

Home lighting is another important area, the researchers said. If you replace just one in four [incandescent bulbs](#) with a [compact fluorescent bulb](#), you can save about 50 percent on your lighting bill. Switching 16 incandescent bulbs for compact fluorescent bulbs saves emissions equal to taking a car off the road for a year.

The experts offer some other energy-conserving tips:

- Recycle your paper, which accounts for nearly 40 percent of waste in the United States. Making a ton of paper from recycled stock saves as many as 17 trees and uses 50 percent less water than making paper from virgin fiber.
- Make greater use of your microwave oven, which is 3.5 to 4.8 times more efficient than a traditional electric oven.
- Turn off or unplug electronic devices when not using them. Leaving your television, stereo, computer and DVD player on when not in use will lead to the release of thousands of pounds of carbon dioxide a year.

- Don't buy water in plastic bottles. Making [plastic water bottles](#) for Americans takes more than 1.5 million barrels of oil a year, enough to fuel about 100,000 cars for a year. Instead, opt for filtered tap water in a reusable bottle when you're on the go, and use a glass container at home or in the office.

**More information:** The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency offers tips for [greener living](#).

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