

Environmental Agency Cautions Against Excess Energy Consumption

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ABU DHABI — The summer months witness a more than two-fold rise in energy consumption in the UAE due to the increased use of air conditioning. Currently, residential customers consume the largest share of electricity in the country and much of it is wasted. According to Emirates Wildlife Society - World Wide Fund for Nature (EWS-WWF), simple changes in our everyday habits could reduce the energy bill by 20 percent.

“While it is true that we need to use air conditioning to keep cool in the summer, we can be more thoughtful about our habits by making sure that we reduce wasteful energy consumption,” says Tanzeed Alam, manager of Climate Change and Sustainability at EWS-WWF.

According to her, the UAE has the highest per capita Ecological Footprint in the world, meaning that if everyone in the world consumed natural resources as an average UAE resident, we would need the equivalent of 4.5 Earth planets to sustain that level of consumption.

Over 80 percent of this footprint is related to carbon dioxide emissions, largely due to fossil fuel-based energy consumption. Rising carbon dioxide emissions could cause global temperatures to rise by over six degrees by the end of the century – a level that the planet has not seen for over 20 million years. The UAE is predicted to face hotter summers, rising sea levels, coastal erosion, biodiversity loss, scarcer freshwater, more extreme storms and economic impacts. “Households are responsible for over 50 percent of our ecological footprint, so every person living in the UAE has the opportunity to be part of the solution by saving energy in their homes. If we don’t take action today, then the impact we are already seeing and are predicted to face as a result of climate change will be profound. So remember, this summer when you reach for the air conditioner, be a hero and use it wisely to look after our only planet and ensure that our summers do not get any hotter than they already are,” adds Fozeya Al Mahmoud, manager of Environmental Education department at Environment Agency - Abu Dhabi, which works closely with EWS-WWF. In fact, the two organisations launched an online campaign earlier this year, offering several tips on water and energy consumption (www.heroesoftheuae.ae).

Easy Ways to Get Energy Efficient

- The Emirates Wildlife Society and World Wide Fund for Nature has suggested energy saving tips that are good for the pocket and the environment, besides being much healthier:
- Turn your air conditioning (AC) thermostat between 24-25 degrees Celsius – this not only reduces energy consumption, but also helps avoid flu and cold as the body is not exposed to drastic change in temperatures when moving from very hot outdoors to very cold indoors.
- Turn the AC off in rooms that you are not using and close the doors.
- Switch off the AC when you go out of the house or on holiday. If you want to keep the AC on while you are away, then set it to over 28 degrees Celsius.
- Close all windows to keep cool air from escaping while the AC is switched on
- Use a ceiling or a pedestal fan at home instead of the AC whenever possible.
- Close all curtains and blinds to keep out direct sunlight—your home stays much cooler and your carpets will not get damaged by direct sunlight.
- Switch off the water heater when not required; many households have a water tank outdoors, which gets heated directly by the sun, meaning you do not need to use your water heater.
- Hang your clothes out to dry in the summer sun, instead of using a dryer—it is much faster, and saves energy and money as well.
- Unplug all appliances when you leave on your summer holidays—they consume energy even if you actually switch them off.
- Avoid using high energy-consuming devices such as washing machines and dryers during the hottest part of the day (noon and afternoon), which is the peak time for electricity consumption.

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