

# Sustainability Top Tips

Getting on top of your energy and water bills and reducing your waste can seem like daunting tasks, but these top tips will help you get started.

## 1 – Energy Management

You may have heard the phrase ‘what isn’t measured can’t be managed’ – and for getting to grips with your energy usage this is certainly true. This doesn’t mean you have to watch your meter all day long, but there are plenty of things you can do to get on top of your energy usage fast!

- Assign responsibility for energy management to a member of staff
- Have a smart meter installed if you don’t already have one, you’ll get accurate bills and will be able to see what times of day and night you are using the most energy - and in a lot of cases your supplier will install it for free
- Write an energy policy which will act as a statement of the commitment you intend to make
- Develop an energy strategy which will set out an action plan of how energy will be managed
- Set your organisation a time-bound target for reducing energy, it will give you a goal to aim for and will help to engage staff – make sure you update them with progress and remember to praise them when its going well

## 2 – Heating

Heating typically accounts for about half of the energy used in offices and as such is a key area to target with energy saving measures. Many businesses are overheated which can cause discomfort and wastes money.

- Check roofs, lofts, walls, windows and doors to ensure that they are well insulated and that there are no gaps
- Installing loft insulation in an uninsulated pitched roof is likely to be the single most cost-effective way to improve the efficiency of building fabric and save money on heating
- Wet buildings are harder and more expensive to heat so carry out regular building checks, to ensure gutters and drains are clear, and that the roof and fabric of the building is sound, to stop water getting in
- Service your boiler annually as costs can increase by 30% if the boiler is poorly operated or maintained.
- Do everything possible to avoid using portable heaters as they are expensive and a sign that your heating system isn’t working properly
- Set a ‘dead band’ of 5°C between your heating and cooling systems to avoid them working simultaneously

## 3 – Lighting

Lighting is a significant energy cost; in many small businesses it can account for 20-50% of your electricity spend. Good savings can be achieved through careful consideration of equipment, maintenance and staff habits.

- Upgrade your lighting to LED; they use up to 80% less electricity than an equivalent traditional tungsten lamp
- If possible, completely renew or re-design your lighting system, rather than retrofit LEDs into existing fittings
- Ensure lights are not on simply because blinds are closed, and consider removing individual lamps to save energy
- Occupancy sensors control whether lights turn on or off by detecting movement and they can achieve savings of up to 30% or more on lighting costs
- Light sensors / photocells are another form of efficient control that automatically turn lights on / off based on natural daylight levels which most businesses could consider installing in suitable spaces

For more information about how you can save energy at your organisation, go to:

## 4 – Water Efficiency

Water usage is an element that can be easily overlooked as it is seen as an essential of day-to-day life, but the costs can quickly add up even if you don't have a big leak!

- Make sure that someone in your organisation knows where both the water meter and water stopcock are – if there's an emergency leak you'll want to know that the supply can be switched off as soon as possible!
- Check the frequency of your meter actually being read by your supplier; you can often be billed for many months on estimates that could be very inaccurate, leaving you in a position where you could have a nasty bill shock!
- If your meter isn't being read manually regularly, look to have someone in your organisation take regular monthly readings which they then report directly to the supplier so you can be billed accurately
- Install water saving devices such as push/automatic taps, tap/showerhead aerators, and low-flow cisterns
- Consider using a water butt to collect rainwater to be used for watering plants and washing cars

## 5 – Waste and Recycling

A good model to follow when looking to reduce your waste impact is the 'waste hierarchy'. This is the concept of trying to prioritise doing the things that will be least damaging to the environment:

- Firstly           **1) Reduce** how much waste you are producing
- Then             **2) Re-use** as much as you can
- Then             **3) Recycle** your waste so it can be made into new things
- Then             **4) Recover** your waste for example sending it to be burned to generate energy
- And finally   **5) Landfill your waste** if you have no other option available

Following these steps will also help you save money, as you won't have to pay to have your waste removed or in some cases could even be paid for your waste!

## 6 – Renewable Energy

Depending on the size and type of business you operate, there are lots of options for how you can use renewable electricity and heat; look for what is most suitable for you. Here are some top tips about renewables that should help you think about what could be best for you:

- If you are looking at installing solar PV panels or a wind turbine to generate electricity, try to size your installation based on how much electricity you can use on site – exporting will make you money, but the biggest element of payback with this type of project tends to be the money you will save by no longer buying from the national grid
- If you want to install a biomass boiler, make sure you have enough space to store the fuel and seek to have a backup conventional system if possible
- When it comes to renew your energy contracts, ask your suppliers to quote for renewable electricity – this way you don't have to carry out any costly installation – and in a lot of cases renewable is the same price as fossil fuel

For more information about how you can save energy at your organisation, go to:

[www.carbontrust.com](http://www.carbontrust.com)

or

[www.wcva.org.uk/environecymru](http://www.wcva.org.uk/environecymru)