

How Many Light Bulbs Does it Take to Change the World?

Lighting accounts for about 20% of all electricity use in the US and 9% of electricity use in our homes. The typical household spends about \$110 per year on lighting and most of this is wasted on inefficient incandescent light bulbs. These bulbs are actually heaters in disguise, converting 90% of the electricity to heat and only about 10% to visible light. ¹

By comparison, compact fluorescent bulbs, or CFLs, use one-quarter to one-third as much electricity as incandescent bulbs and last up to ten times as long. Where electricity is produced from coal—and most is—each CFL will cut carbon dioxide emissions by about 1,300 pounds over its lifetime.

- If every one of the 110 million American households replaced a single 60-watt incandescent bulb in their home with a 15-watt CFL, the energy saved would be enough to power 2.5 million homes, the equivalent to taking 800,000 cars off the road. ²
- If every American home replaced the five most frequently used bulbs with CFLs, one trillion pounds of greenhouse gases would be kept out of the air over the course of the bulbs' 5 to 8-year lives. That's equivalent to the annual emissions of 8 million cars, or the annual output of more than 20 power plants.
- This action alone could halt the growth in carbon dioxide emissions from the US, while saving over \$10 billion in annual electricity costs. Since the average home has between 50 and 100 light sockets, the potential for additional savings ranges into the hundreds of billions of dollars per year.

The electricity savings and longer life of CFLs make them the fastest, cheapest, most reliable way to reduce energy costs and cut global warming pollution. To locate a store near you that sells CFLs, go to the US Department of Energy's Energy Star website, at http://www.energystar.gov/index.cfm?fuseaction=store.store_locator.

Notes

¹ American Council for an Energy Efficient Economy, at <http://www.aceee.org/press/op-eds/op-ed1.htm>.

² US Department of Energy, at http://www.energystar.gov/index.cfm?c=cfls.pr_cfls.