Individuals, Households and Carbon

We recently presented the film *Kilowatt Ours*, which addressed many of the things we can do in our own homes to reduce carbon emissions: changing to compact fluorescent bulbs; purchasing Energy Star appliances, windows and doors; insulating, caulking, sealing heat ducts, and weatherizing your home. The monetary savings to a household are impressive.

One of the greatest sources of carbon emissions is the 52% of America's energy which comes from coal. The typical American home uses 30 kilowatt (kw) hours of electricity per day or 10,800 kw hours per year. In a year you are looking at the average home using over 5 tons of coal. Annually the U.S. mines and burns 1.1 billion tons of coal, enough to fill a coal train stretching from coast to coast and back and then around the world three times. Coal, besides omitting CO2, is also a major source of mercury pollution.

One pound of coal gives us approximately 1 kw hour of energy. With this energy you can burn 10 incandescent bulbs for one hour, operate a refrigerator for half an hour or an air conditioner or hot water heater for 15 minutes.

Energy in our country is always been relatively inexpensive and much of our household use of energy is formed by habit. American often mention the inconvenience or expense of changing their energy habits, but energy uses in many instances is only a habit which can be changed.

There are numerous sources for obtaining information on energy saving and the reduction of your carbon footprint. Go to www.kilowattours.org, and click on "start saving" for a plan to follow to reduce your carbon emissions. The book, Low Carbon Diet, has many hints for reduction of carbon. You may go to their website at www.empowermentinstitute.com to calculate your carbon usage and set up a reduction plan.

Perhaps these tools may help you change your energy habits. The Low Carbon Diet book recommends groups of households meeting and planning sessions to reduce their emissions. If you are interested please contact us.