

# NEW YEAR, NEW YOU:



# EMPLOYEE SUSTAINABILITY CHALLENGE JANUARY 2021



**BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE DEPARTMENT OF  
ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY**

**Note:** Participation in the New Year, New You: Employee Sustainability Challenge may not be counted as work hours.

**Disclaimer:** All resources provided as part of the New Year, New You: Employee Sustainability Challenge are for informational purposes only. Cook County does not endorse any of these entities nor their services nor does Cook County make any warranties regarding the reliability or accuracy of this information.

# CHALLENGE OVERVIEW

It's as Easy as 1,2,3...

STEP  
**01**

Take Action

Complete an action, attend a webinar, or engage with a resource

STEP  
**02**

Self Report

Self report your actions for the week via a Microsoft form

STEP  
**03**

Be Entered to Win

When we receive your self-report, you will be entered to win a prize!

## WEEK 1 ACTIONS (1.4-1.10)

ACTION 1: **REDUCE SCREEN BRIGHTNESS**

ACTION 2: **SWITCH TO LED LIGHT BULBS**

ACTION 3: **TAKE THE CONSERVE COOK COUNTY PLEDGE**

ATTEND: **ENERGY WEBINAR WITH COOK COUNTY & ELEVATE ENERGY**

SEE PAGE 3 FOR DETAILS

## WEEK 2 ACTIONS (1.11-1.17)

ACTION 1: **RESEARCH YOUR COMMUTE**

ACTION 2: **TURN DOWN THE THERMOSTAT**

ACTION 3: **CHOOSE ALTERNATIVE TRANSPORTATION**

LISTEN: **THE ENERGY GANG**

SEE PAGE 4 FOR DETAILS

## WEEK 3 ACTIONS (1.18-1.24)

ACTION 1: **UNPLUG DEVICES**

ACTION 2: **DO LAUNDRY WITH COLD WATER**

ACTION 3: **SPEND TIME AWAY FROM SCREENS**

ATTEND: **CITIZENS UTILITY BOARD'S UTILITY BILL CLINIC**

SEE PAGE 5 FOR DETAILS

## WEEK 4 ACTIONS (1.25-1.31)

ACTION 1: **TURN OFF LIGHTS**

ACTION 2: **REVERSE CEILING FAN**

ACTION 3: **RESEARCH RENEWABLE ENERGY**

WATCH: **HAPPENING: A CLEAN ENERGY REVOLUTION**

SEE PAGE 6 FOR DETAILS

FOR DETAILS ON THE CHALLENGES YOU ARE INTERESTED IN AND TO LEARN HOW TO REPORT YOUR PARTICIPATION, SCROLL DOWN!

# WEEK 1 DETAILS

## REDUCE SCREEN BRIGHTNESS

Reducing the brightness of your computer screen at work can lead to energy savings. According to this [green tip](#) from Harvard Law School, reducing screen brightness from 100% to 70% can save up to 20% of the energy that the monitor uses. **This week we challenge you to reduce your screen brightness to the lowest comfortable level.** If your monitor has one, you can also enable energy save mode. And this challenge can be applied beyond the office to any device you use.

## SWITCH TO LED LIGHT BULBS

Swapping your light bulbs to a light-emitting diode (LED) version is a simple way to save significant energy in your home. According to this [article](#) from the US Department of Energy, residential LEDs use at least 75% less energy, and last 25 times longer, than incandescent lighting. **This week we challenge you to replace any non-LED light bulbs in your home with an LED version.** If you are replacing a compact fluorescent light bulb (CFL), remember that it contains mercury and should not go in the trash. Try using Earth911's [Recycle Search](#) to find a facility accepting CFLs near you. You can also search for sites accepting incandescent light bulbs using the Recycle Search.

## TAKE THE CONSERVE COOK COUNTY PLEDGE

You will spend the month learning about energy efficiency and taking action to reduce your energy use. It is the perfect time for you to take the [Conserve Cook County Pledge](#). One easy way to move us closer to our sustainability goals is to get as many people on board as possible. **This week we challenge you to take the Conserve Cook County Pledge and to tell your coworkers, friends, and family that you did so.** If you make a social media post, use the hashtag #ConserveCook. Your efforts are so important and you have the power to multiply your impact by getting your friends and families interested too. We would love to hear how your conversation goes.

## ATTEND

**Wednesday, January 6th | 12pm-1pm**

Join the Department of Environment and Sustainability, Cook County Energy Manager, Jamie Meyers, and our partner Elevate Energy to hear about the County's Clean Energy Plan, energy efficiency projects in County buildings, and ways to save on your utility bills and make your home more comfortable through energy efficiency.

Join the webinar [here](#).

**SELF-REPORT YOUR WEEK 1 ACTIONS [HERE](#)**

## WEEK 2 DETAILS

### RESEARCH YOUR COMMUTE

Did you know that in 2019, 74.8% of Cook County's transportation emissions came from employee commuting? That is a total of almost 35,000 metric tons of CO<sub>2</sub> just from employees getting to and from work. There are many opportunities to reduce the environmental impact of your commute, including working from home, walking or biking, taking public transportation, carpooling, avoiding rush hour and investing in an electric vehicle. **This week we challenge you to research opportunities for reducing the environmental impact of your commute.**

Here are some recommended resources to help you get started:

[Commute Planning](#)  
[Plan Your Commute](#)  
[Commute Cost Calculator](#)  
[MapQuest RoutePlanner](#)

[Biking](#)  
[Everyday Bike Tips](#)  
[Biking to Work](#)  
[Bike Maintenance Guide](#)  
[Illinois Bicycle Rules of the Road](#)

[Green Vehicles](#)  
[Electric Vehicles 101](#)  
[EV Station Locator](#)  
[EPA's Green Vehicle Guide](#)

### TURN DOWN THE THERMOSTAT

Winter is here! And we know it is tempting to turn up the heat and snuggle in. But, did you know that you can save a significant amount of energy and money by turning your thermostat down in the winter (and up in the summer)? **This week we challenge you to turn down your thermostat by a few degrees.** The US Department of Energy suggests setting your thermostat to 68°F while you are awake and even lower when you are asleep or away from the house. Check out their [website](#) for more information.

### CHOOSE ALTERNATIVE TRANSPORTATION

According to the Better Government Association, cars and trucks top coal as the biggest contributor to climate change in Illinois. We know it is cold out, but if you are able, completing your errands without a car, will make a huge impact for our planet. And it can be a great way to explore your local community and get some exercise! **This week we challenge you to choose an alternative to driving to complete your errands.** More from the Better Government Association [here](#).

### LISTEN

Listen to the [podcast](#) The Energy Gang for a weekly digest on energy, cleantech, and the environment.

**SELF-REPORT YOUR WEEK 2 ACTIONS [HERE](#)**

## WEEK 3 DETAILS

### UNPLUG DEVICES

Ever heard of Standby Power or Vampire Energy? These refer to the power, or energy, used when devices and appliances are switched off, but still plugged in. Read our vampire energy [blog\\_post](#) for tips to make sure you don't pay for energy you aren't actually using. **This week we challenge you to unplug devices in your office (and home!) when they are not in use.** Video game consoles are a great place to start, since they suck up the most energy and provide the biggest opportunity for cost savings.

\*NOTE: If you are working at your Cook County office, there are several devices that should not be unplugged. Please DO NOT unplug printer, monitor, computer tower, etc. Please DO unplug personal devices (cell phone, headphones, laptop, etc.), pencil sharpener, hole punch, stapler, kettle, coffee machine, microwave, personal lights, and so on when not being used. If you are not sure if a device is okay to unplug, leave it plugged in.

### DO LAUNDRY WITH COLD WATER

The laundry room can be one of the biggest energy users in a home. There are several strategies for reducing energy consumption in the laundry room, and one of the easiest is to lower the temperature of the water you are using. The US Department of Energy estimates that using warm water rather than hot can cut a load's energy use in half, and using cold water will save even more. **This week we challenge you to do your laundry using cold (or warm) water, rather than hot.** For more tips on saving energy in the laundry room check out this [article](#).

### SPEND TIME AWAY FROM SCREENS

According to this [blog\\_post](#) by Direct Energy, TV and Media Equipment is the 5th largest energy use category in a typical home, accounting for about 4% of household energy on average. **This week we challenge you to spend time away from screens.** Consider checking out a new park or walking path in your neighborhood or choose an energy-free indoor entertainment option like reading or playing a board game!

### ATTEND

**Tuesday, January 19th | 5:30pm-7:30pm**

Join Citizens Utility Board (CUB) and the Cook County Department of Environment and Sustainability for a free virtual utility bill consultation. CUB staff will provide a one-on-one analysis of your utility bills to help you better understand your bills and look for potential savings.

Register [here](#).

**SELF-REPORT YOUR WEEK 3 ACTIONS [HERE](#)**

## WEEK 4 DETAILS

### TURN OFF LIGHTS

Turning off the lights when you leave your (home) office for the evening can result in significant energy savings. You can also save energy by relying on natural light during the day and keeping the lights switched off. **This week we challenge you to turn off the lights when they are not needed.** For a more in depth look at the benefits of switching off the lights, read this [article](#) from the US Department of Energy.

### REVERSE CEILING FAN

Did you know that your ceiling fan can be used for temperature control year round? In the winter, setting your fan to move in a clockwise direction at a low speed will produce an updraft forcing warm air near the ceiling to move down into the living space. You can turn down your thermostat while using the fan to reduce your energy consumption and keep your home more comfortable. **This week we challenge you to reverse the direction of your ceiling fan.** For more information on energy and ceiling fans check out this [article](#) by the US Department of Energy. And for guidance on how to reverse the direction of your fan, see this [video](#).

### RESEARCH RENEWABLE ENERGY

This challenge is about awareness. Cook County, in collaboration with several partners, is working toward several renewable energy goals in County buildings and in the community. **This week we challenge you to spend time researching renewable energy in Cook County and/or your neighborhood.** Let us know if you find anything particularly interesting!

Here are some suggestions for how to spend your hour:

- Read Cook County's [Clean Energy Plan](#)
- Learn about solar energy options available in Cook County: [Community Solar & IL Solar for All](#)
- For an overview of renewable energy types, look at this [page](#) by ComEd.

### WATCH

Watch the 2017 renewable energy [documentary](#) Happening: A Clean Energy Revolution. Follow filmmaker Jamie Redford on a journey across the US to meet pioneers of clean energy technology.

**SELF-REPORT YOUR WEEK 4 ACTIONS [HERE](#)**