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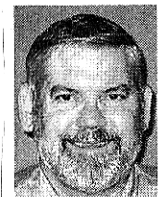
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TENNESSEE VOICES

A few minor changes by consumers in electric use can yield big results

By **RANDY CHASTAIN**

When House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and former Speaker Newt Gingrich appear together supporting a common cause, you know it is time to dig out Bob Dylan's famous ballad, "The Times, They Are A Changing."



CHASTAIN

Global climate change combined with a growing shortage of energy and its resulting spiraling costs produces a monster that requires an immediate response. In the middle of the issue is the consumption of electricity and its associated carbon footprint. At 3.8 trillion kilowatt hours of annual consumption, the U.S. is by far the world's largest consumer of electricity

and Tennessee has one of the largest per capita appetites. This "footprint" becomes extra heavy since the U.S. generates 71.4 percent of its power through the use of fossil fuels.

The good news is there is a lot Tennesseans can do. Sixty-eight percent of our annual electric consumption comes from our homes and offices. However, we can target a response and build high performance homes by locating the source of our waste. Currently, the average American home consumes electricity through heating and cooling, kitchen appliances, water heaters, lighting, home electronics and washer and dryers (from most to least). Pinpointing this usage produces a road map to solutions for both existing and new home construction.



Animals can pick up on humans' anxiety and stress. Peg Dawson Harrington, with The Happy Hound, has tips on how to communicate better with your pet. Search **OPINION** to read her piece.

To reduce electricity use in existing homes, use programmable thermostats to cut waste usage at night and when at work; replace HVAC units as they age with high-efficiency, high SEER units; substitute a water heater with a tankless system, if gas is available; switch standard light bulbs in both recessed cans and lamps with compact florescent bulbs and remove appliances as they age with new "energy star" rated appliances.

These changes are relatively easy and cost-sensitive when timed with the natural replacement of worn out

fixtures and appliances.

A series of specifications can be woven together to create a "high performance" home in new home construction. Builders should chose the LEED rating and inspection system to clearly communicate the expectation of new "green" building technologies. The LEED program offers a holistic approach to electricity use and to water and other natural resource conservation. For example, water saving fixtures, combined with an efficient irrigation system, greatly reduce water usage.

Among other specifications, homes could include special soy-sprayed insulation for the entire roof cavity and the walls. This insulation combines with highly efficient engineered HVAC systems, tankless water

heaters, low-emittance windows, efficient high compression fluorescent lighting and energy star appliances and geothermal capabilities.

Finally, as technology enables, builders should produce homes that qualify as "zero energy" and sell power back to the "grid." Thanks to the sun, the world has a renewable usable energy source that exceeds the world's 2004 electricity use by 8,000 times. In fact, new exciting solar technology is right around the corner.

There is much we can do right now! As Bob Dylan says ...

*Come gather round people
Wherever you roam
And admit that the waters
Around you have grown*

Randy Chastain is president of Parkside Homes, LLC, located in Franklin.