

CONSUMER CONNECTION

Spring *forward*

Living Green

Simple ways to save money, energy, and the planet - all around your home

Eco-burials

Go green forever

Online Consumer Services Center Debuts

Auto Emissions

New rules coming your way

Although the **CONSUMER CONNECTION** is an online magazine, printed copies are available upon request. To order copies of this issue and previous issues, call the Department of Consumer Affairs' Office of Publishing, Design & Editing at (866) 320-8652, or write to us at: 1625 North Market Blvd., Suite N-112, Sacramento, CA 95834.

The **CONSUMER CONNECTION** is produced by the Department of Consumer Affairs' Office of Publishing, Design & Editing. If you have any questions or comments, please e-mail us at consumerconnection@dca.ca.gov.

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Director's Message



Spring is the season of renewal and a great time to think about the environment. Renewal, after all, is the root concern of the environmental movement—whether the way we act as individuals and communities will allow our ecosystem to renew the basic processes that support life.

What does this have to do with the Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA)? Everything. How we consume is the determining factor in whether our environment is able to sustain itself.

In this issue of *Consumer Connection*, we suggest a number of safe and sensible ways to help the environment. We give you information on energy-efficient appliances and why selection is key if you want a rebate from your local energy utility.

What if your home is a little too environmentally friendly—that is, a haven for rodents and insects? If nature is the problem, perhaps it is also the solution as we look at nonchemical pest control.

Looking down the road, we'll learn why hydrogen may be an important part of our transportation future and what Californians are doing now to prepare.

Since our lives are finite, the ends of our lives should also mark the end of our environmental impacts. Thinking outside the box, some Californians believe that traditional graves with well-fertilized, watered, and manicured lawns make perpetual and unnecessary demands on the environment. In this issue, we'll look at cemeteries that offer low-impact graves that blend in with the local terrain.

Finally, in this season of renewed growth and hope, we at the Department of Consumer Affairs would like to also renew our personal commitment to serving you, the California consumer.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Carrie Lopez". The signature is fluid and cursive.

CARRIE LOPEZ, DIRECTOR
Department of Consumer Affairs

What's it mean to be **GREEN?**

Commonly used terms and definitions

Here are some explanations of “green” terminology taken from various State and Federal government sources:

Is global warming the same as climate change?

Yes and no. Both terms are used to refer to an increase in the surface temperature of the Earth. Some experts tend to prefer the term “climate change” because it includes natural changes in climate, not just warming. Most scientists agree that the Earth is warming faster than at any time in the previous 1,000 years. There is disagreement, however, about what is causing it and what should be done about it.



What is a carbon footprint and how do I find out what mine is?

A carbon footprint is a measure of the impact human activities have on the environment in terms of the amount of carbon dioxide produced. Thus, reducing your carbon footprint reduces the amount of carbon dioxide going into the atmosphere. Various public and private entities have online carbon footprint calculators you can use to calculate the amount of carbon dioxide produced by you or your family's daily activities. These calculators have their critics, however, and results vary widely.

Here are some carbon footprint calculators:

www.carbonfootprint.com/USA/calculator.html

<http://epw.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?FuseAction=majority.CarbonCalc>

www.fightglobalwarming.com/carboncalculator.cfm

<http://green.yahoo.com/calculator/>

www.wecandothis.com/

www.pge.com/about_us/environment/calculator/

www.safeclimate.net/calculator/

What are carbon offsets?

For individuals, the term refers to voluntarily paying for someone (usually a business) to reduce its carbon emissions, instead of you reducing your own carbon emissions. Thus, your emissions are offset by someone else's reduction — in theory, at least. Tree planting is a popular offset, but other options include renewable energy sources or conservation. The concept is very controversial. As with all consumer purchases, investigating before you buy is wise. One source is *A Consumer's Guide to Carbon Offsets*, by Clean Air-Cool Earth, a nonprofit group. The guide, published in

December 2006, is available online at www.cleanair-coolplanet.org/ConsumersGuidetoCarbonOffsets.pdf.

Another online source on carbon offsets is provided by a nonprofit organization www.carbonfund.org, whose information is used by several major U.S. corporations. The Federal Trade Commission is holding public meetings on a number of green marketing topics, including the marketing of carbon offsets and renewable energy certificates. For details, see www.ftc.gov/bcp/workshops/carbonoffsets/index.shtml.


How does saving energy and saving water help reduce greenhouse gases?

For most of us, electricity used to power our homes is created by burning fossil fuels. Lower demand for electricity can mean less fuel burned to make it. Municipal water systems also use energy to purify and distribute water to households. If you conserve water, you are conserving the fuel it takes to clean it and move it. If you use less hot water, you are also saving the gas or electricity used to heat the water in your home. One thing we can all agree on is that saving energy saves money for consumers.

Here in California we hear a lot about AB 32.

What is it?

Assembly Bill 32, also known as the California Global Warming Solutions Act, is the first law to comprehensively limit greenhouse gas emissions at the state level. It was signed into law by Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger on September 27, 2006. Among other things, it establishes annual mandatory reporting of greenhouse gas emissions for significant sources and sets emission limits to cut the State's greenhouse gas emissions by 2010.



“Pushing up daisies” isn’t just a quaint phrase anymore. That’s exactly what some people want to do after death. “Natural,” or “green” burials — in which a body is buried with no casket, no grave marker, no embalming, and none of the other hallmarks of traditional funeral services— have gained a toehold in California over the last few years.



Going Natural Even in Death

Eco-burials gain fans

It’s hard to know how many of the estimated 1,500 cemeteries in California offer some degree of natural burial. The State, through the Department of Consumer Affairs’ Cemetery and Funeral Bureau, licenses approximately 200 private and fraternal cemeteries. Moreover, there are no special regulatory requirements in California that would prevent a natural burial or the establishment of a natural burial site. Under State law, the body must be properly refrigerated within 24 hours, but embalming is not required. Although there are rules regarding cement grave liners, requirements for headstones and caskets are set by the cemeteries themselves, not by the State. As to where a community places a cemetery, that decision is left to local jurisdictions.

So far, only one California-licensed cemetery offers green services to the ecologically minded: Marin County's Forever Fernwood in scenic Mill Valley, just north of San Francisco. Another cemetery that offers eco-burials, administered by a local cemetery district, is in Southern California. Natural burials usually cost far less than standard burials.

If "location, location, location" is the hallmark of good real estate — that is what a gravesite is at its most basic — then Forever Fernwood has one of the best. Its 32 acres of sometimes fog-shrouded grassland, brush, and mixed forest are situated on the north slope of a ridge. About half of the site is a conventional, active cemetery dating from the late 19th century, while the rest is set aside for natural burials. Although bodies can be buried at Fernwood in biodegradable caskets and burial shrouds, with no embalming fluids or vaults, the process is not entirely low-tech: A Global Positioning System (GPS) identifies each burial location. Because traditional stone grave markers are avoided in favor of natural landmarks such as trees and shrubs, the land can be preserved and enjoyed in its natural condition.

Natural burials, proponents say, are preferable to typical burials because the former do not use natural resources such as hardwoods or metals to make caskets, nor introduce embalming chemicals, which they believe are harmful, into the ground. In fact, the practice of natural burials is merely a return to the past, supporters say. Embalming didn't become common in the United States until the Civil War, when bodies of soldiers had to be preserved for the final journey home.

In recent times, natural burials reappeared first in the United Kingdom, when the city of Carlisle established the first "woodland burial site," where, as the name implies, the cemetery is practically indistinguishable from the natural land that surrounds it. The idea is now widespread there. In 1994, a charitable group dedicated to at-home death care, the Natural Death Centre, established the Association of Natural Burial Grounds to assist the growing number of properties set aside to cater to the environmentally conscious and to help create more. There are now more than 200 natural burial grounds in the U.K. According to the Association, just over half are run by local authorities, with the rest run by private landowners such as farmers, charitable trusts, and nonprofit organizations.

The first ecoburial site in the United States, the Ramsey Creek Preserve in South Carolina, opened in 1998. It is one of only five burial areas in the nation certified as green under standards developed by the Green Burial Council, a nonprofit group that promotes more environmentally sound death-care practices. However, the Council also has a list of approved providers who will provide a green burial within conventional facilities in eight states, including California.

For more information, visit the following:

www.greenburialcouncil.org

www.greenburials.org

http://healing.about.com/od/greenburials/Dust_to_Dust_Green_Burials.htm

Debugging your home

Simple and safe
ways to keep
insect pests at bay

Being environmentally friendly doesn't mean you have to welcome all creatures of the Earth into your home. It's okay to fight back.

First, a couple of cautions: If you spray store-bought bug killer around your home, follow label directions and warnings, and be aware that do-it-yourself treatment may provide only temporary relief.

If you hire a professional to exterminate household pests — rodents, ants, bees, flies, cockroaches, spiders, weevils, moths and the like—be sure that professional or business is licensed by the Department of Consumer Affairs' Structural Pest Control Board (SPCB). You can verify the SPCB license online at www.pestboard.ca.gov, or by calling (916) 561-8704.

SPCB has three consumer publications, *Questions & Answers Regarding Household Pest Control*, *General Information A to Z*, and *Structural Pest Control Inspections* available online. Call SPCB at (800) 737-8188 to have printed copies mailed to you.

Additional information is available from the California Department of Pesticide Regulation, www.cdpr.ca.gov.

If you prefer to avoid using insecticides, the University of California's Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Program has information for you. IPM experts have several suggestions for nonchemical pest control techniques to combat common household pests. Simple steps to make your home or garden less attractive to insects may be the most effective (and most environmentally friendly) approach. More information on IPM is available at www.ipm.ucdavis.edu.

Here are some suggestions from the Integrated Pest Management Web site:

Ants



- Sponge ants with soapy water.
- Plug up ant entryways with caulk or petroleum jelly.
- Clean up any food sources.
- Store food in closed containers, preferably plastic.
- Clean up grease and spills in the kitchen.
- Remove sweet food sources outdoors next to your house, such as aphid-infested plants or ripened fruit on trees.
- Wash pet dishes after each use.
- Look for and remove indoor nesting sites, such as indoor plants.
- Use bait traps from your hardware store to control colonies.

Cockroaches



- Remove food and water sources cockroaches can access.
- Seal off hiding places, such as the false bottoms of cupboards.
- Store food in covered containers, preferably plastic.
- Keep tight-fitting lids on garbage containers.
- Eliminate plumbing leaks.
- Clean kitchen floors and counters daily.
- Seal cracks and openings in walls.
- Remove newspapers, paper bags, boxes, and other clutter from kitchens and bathrooms.
- Use bait traps from your hardware store.

Spiders



- Seal home foundation cracks and other access holes.
- Maintain good seals on window screens and doors.
- Keep areas around the foundation of your home clear of clutter.
- Vacuum up spiders and their webs or trap spiders in a jar and release them outside.
- Remove spider webs from the exterior of the home with a broom or high-pressure hose.
- Inspect window and door screens for good seals that keep out spiders and the insects they prey on.

General tips

- Vacuum carpets regularly to reduce dust mites and fleas.
- Keep fallen leaves and debris away from the foundation of the house.
- Don't forget the rolled-up newspaper or fly swatter to eliminate insects; experts call it "mechanical control."



Smart Household Appliances

Save energy and maybe get money back, too

Did you know the average household could cut its energy bill by a third—or even a half—by switching to energy-efficient appliances, equipment and lighting? So say the folks at FlexYourPower.com, a Web site sponsored by the State of California. The site has a wealth of details and resources on steps you can take to help save money and save the planet, too.

For home appliances, there are two words to remember: Energy Star. Energy Star is a Federal government-sponsored program that encourages the use of energy-efficient products and practices. The Web site, www.energystar.gov, has tools and resources to help you plan and undertake projects to reduce your energy bills and improve your home's comfort.

One thing you'll discover is that looking for the yellow EnergyGuide label on an appliance is not enough. You'll have to read and compare the labels to decide if the product will give you the savings you seek. Information on specific products is available from a searchable database on the Energy Star Web site, www.energystar.gov.

When you shop for energy-efficient appliances, don't be misled. Names like "Energy Miser," "Energy Saver" and "Fuel Saver" don't necessarily guarantee savings. The best way to determine the energy efficiency of appliances is to actually compare information listed on the EnergyGuide labels.

Here are some appliance-buying tips from the California Energy Commission.
Find more at www.consumerenergycenter.org.



CLOTHES DRYERS

If you're shopping for a clothes dryer, look for one with a cycle that includes a cool-down period, sometimes called a "perma-press" cycle. In the last few minutes of the cycle, cool air, rather than heated air, is blown through the tumbling clothes to complete the drying process. That cool-down saves energy and is easier on your clothes.



CLOTHES WASHERS

Invest in a front-loading washing machine, which has a door in the front instead of a lid on the top. Front loaders cut water use by nearly 40 percent, and reduce wear and tear on clothes. They also reduce drying time by squeezing more water out of the laundry during the spin cycle.



DISHWASHERS

Today's dishwashers need water hot enough to melt dishwasher soap and clean greasy dishes—at least 140 degrees. By purchasing a dishwasher with a booster heater, you can set your home's water heater at 120 degrees. If your dishwasher has an air-dry setting, choose it. Doing so will allow you to cut your dishwasher's energy use anywhere from 15 percent to 50 percent.



OVENS AND RANGES

Newer ovens have additional insulation and tighter-fitting oven door gaskets and hinges that help save energy. With electric cook tops, the solid disk elements and radiant elements under glass are easier to clean, but they take longer to heat up, and use more electricity. Halogen and induction elements are more efficient than conventional electric coil elements, but you are limited to using only iron or steel pots.



REFRIGERATORS

Refrigerators with the freezer on the bottom or top are more efficient. Bottom-freezer models use approximately 16 percent less energy than side-by-side models, and top freezer models use about 13 percent less than side-by-side. Through-the-door icemakers and water dispensers reduce the need to open the door, which helps maintain a more constant temperature. However, these features will increase your refrigerator's energy use by 14 percent to 20 percent. Mini-doors give you easy access to items you use the most. The main door is opened less often, which saves energy.



Discounts and Rebates

A new appliance can mean money saved and money returned

The State's largest utilities are offering home energy efficiency rebates to consumers who purchase certain energy-efficient home appliances and other products. In each case, you have to be a qualified customer of the utility, plus meet other terms. Check with each utility for specifics. Here are some of the rebates currently being offered:

- The Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (www.ladwp.com) is offering the biggest consumer rebate program in the city's history. Rebates are available for up to \$250 for a high-efficiency washer and \$100 in a combined rebate if you turn in your old refrigerator and buy a new high-efficiency model.

- Southern California Edison (www.sce.com) offers rebates of \$50 for the purchase of certain refrigerators and freezers, plus \$50 if you let the utility haul away your old fridge.

- Southern California Gas Company (www.socalgas.com) is offering \$200 back on the purchase of a tankless water heater and \$30 to \$35 on certain dishwashers and clothes washers. Participating retailers in the Southern California area can subtract the rebate from the purchase price, saving you the trouble of mailing in the rebate form.

- Pacific Gas and Electric Company (www.pge.com) is offering rebates of \$35 and \$75 for the purchase of certain high-efficiency washers, \$30 and \$50 for dishwashers, and \$35 to recycle your old refrigerator or freezer.

- San Diego Gas and Electric Company (www.sdge.com) offers \$30 rebates on certain dishwashers and \$50 on certain refrigerators.



Beware of Greenwashing



This term describes the practice of deceptively labeling products to make them seem good for the environment. Greenwashing began in the late 1980s when consumers expressed a willingness to buy “green” products, when terms such as eco-safe, earth-friendly, earth smart, ozone safe, and

more began to appear. In many cases, these were examples of creative advertising rather than truthful representations of an environmentally preferable product. The U.S. Federal Trade Commission has a guide to help you sort out environmental advertising claims. It is available online at www.ftc.gov/bcp/edu/pubs/consumer/general/gen02.shtm.

Conning the Cons: Quick-thinking consumer foils scammers

One California senior nearly lost \$25,000 to a fraud currently operating in the Bay Area but known nationally as the Latin lotto scam. Common sense and quick thinking saved him. Barely. Out for his morning stroll, Aurelio Ramirez was asked for directions by a bewildered fellow. As Ramirez scoured his memory for the obscure address, a woman passing by said she knew the location the man was searching for. She offered to drive the grateful stranger to his destination, but only if Ramirez came along.

Retired and with time on his hands, Ramirez agreed. In the car, the stranger said he had a winning lottery ticket, which he could not claim because he was undocumented and the lottery required a Social Security number and pre-payment of taxes. The woman called the lottery on her cell phone and learned that the ticket was worth \$1.5 million. She then proposed that she and Ramirez claim the money for the stranger in exchange for a reward of \$100,000 each. All they had to do was pay off a required tax deposit of \$25,000 each.

After they all agreed to the deal, the woman stopped at her bank but was only able to withdraw \$23,000. Ramirez then withdrew \$15,000 from two branches of his bank. As they looked for another branch, the woman proposed that they keep all their money in one bag for safety. Ramirez began to smell a rat. He said there was no need to keep the money in one bag, nor was he worried because his daughter worked for the FBI, and he had told her the whole story and given her the car’s license number.

The demeanor of Ramirez’ new partners changed to alarm as they dropped him off and admonished him for betraying their secret arrangement. Realizing he had dodged a con, Ramirez gratefully redeposited his money.



Hydrogen Highway

How the State helps provide alternative fuels

Are Hummers and other SUVs going the way of dinosaurs? That seemed the implication in 2006 when Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger and the California Legislature agreed on a plan to slash greenhouse gas emissions by 25 percent. Would car-crazy California give up its luxury autos?



The answer is “Nein!” according to an interview with Governor Schwarzenegger by German magazine *Der Spiegel* in 2006. Citing the examples of his own hydrogen-powered Hummer and BMW, the Governor said, “Protecting the environment does not require us to be against large SUVs or trucks. Instead, we should develop technology to cut down greenhouse gas emissions because that is where the action is—it’s not about what the size of the car is. We just have to redo the vehicles... . We should be saying, ‘Keep the luxury car!’”

What about when that hydrogen-powered car’s fuel gauge reads empty? How far do we have to go for a hydrogen fix? The sun? Not quite. Thanks to the Governor’s California Hydrogen Highway Network, hydrogen-powered commuters have a choice of 24 fueling stations throughout the State. Fifteen are public, and nine serve private fleets. They are located mainly around Sacramento, the Bay Area, and the Los Angeles/San Diego regions. These stations are not apt to be busy, since California currently has only 126 hydrogen-burning private vehicles (fuel cell and hydrogen internal combustion) and

eight transit buses in operation. Early plans for the Network called for 50 to 100 stations serving 2,000 hydrogen-powered vehicles by 2010.

Hydrogen can power vehicles in two ways—directly by burning in an internal combustion engine or by creating current in the fuel cells of an electric-powered vehicle. Critics point out that using hydrogen to power engines is inefficient compared to fossil fuels and that fuel cells are not affordable for most consumers.

“This is true, but only today, and only while fossil fuels are plentiful and cheap,” said Mary Nichols, Chairman of the California Air Resources Board (ARB). “Hydrogen-using technology is constantly being refined, and innovations will soon make it more practical. Consider that [the] ARB is now in the process of placing two shuttle buses powered by hydrogen in separate real-world test programs. Such vehicles speak to the potential energy of hydrogen to power large engines.”

To learn more about the Hydrogen Highway, visit www.HydrogenHighway.ca.gov.



Online and at Your Command

California Consumer Services Center debuts on the DCA Web site

The Web site of the Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA) has long been a source of information and links for consumers. Late last year, that collection of information and links expanded by leaps and bounds with the launch of DCA's and the State of California's new Consumer Services Center.

The new center, powered by the Google Custom Search Engine, links users of State Web sites to a vast network of information offered by State and Federal agencies and respected nonprofits. The Consumer Services Center, which is maintained by DCA and was developed in conjunction with the State's eServices Office, goes beyond the static Web portal to provide live, dynamic links, including up-to-date news on consumer issues from around the world.

Visitors can also use the Consumer Services Center to verify a license for a range of professionals. Clicking on the License Verification tab at the top of the page brings up a list of entities throughout the State that handle licensing—from the Board of Equalization to the Office of Real Estate Appraisers.

Filing a complaint is also simplified through the Consumer Services Center. Clicking on the Complaint Assistance tab at the top brings up a list of links that connect the user to locations where complaints can be filed. There's even a link for small claims court information which brings up the DCA publication *The Small Claims Court, a Guide to its Practical Use*.

Information available through the Consumer Services Center is grouped into topics that include products, privacy, financial, housing, food, and transportation. Under the Google search function, topics include:

- California information
- Federal information
- Advocacy groups
- California laws and regulations
- Federal laws and regulations
- News

The addition of the Consumer Services Center is part of an ongoing effort to provide better and faster access to services and information for California consumers. The Center can be found at www.consumer-sc.ca.gov or www.dca.ca.gov.

What's New from DCA boards and bureaus

The Cemetery and Funeral Bureau



The Cemetery and Funeral Bureau has updated its *Consumer Guide to Funeral and Cemetery Purchases*. The booklet is designed to assist you in making the difficult decisions about funeral and cemetery arrangements for yourself or someone close to you. By asking the right questions, comparing prices and services, and making informed decisions, you can make arrangements that are meaningful to you and your family, while staying within your budget. The booklet includes information on price lists, embalming, cremation, burial, home death care, coroner's fees, retail casket sellers, and multiple death graves. Special circumstances, such as a death out of state or out of the country, and donation of the body for medical purposes are also covered. There is also information on making advance arrangements for yourself or a loved one.

The Bureau of Security and Investigative Services



The Bureau of Security and Investigative Services has created a new publication for industry professional and consumers titled *A Guide to the Bureau of Security and Investigative Services*. The two-sided brochure has information on one side for consumers and on the other side for industry professionals. The consumer side details the types of security professional licensed by the Bureau—locksmith companies and their employees, private investigators, security guards, and alarm companies and their employees. The brochure also contains tips on how to be an informed consumer and what to do if you have a problem with a security professional.

How to Order



Call our publications hotline at (866) 320-8652 to order free copies of these publications. Bulk copies are available to community service organizations. You can also download and send in a copy of the DCA Publications List. Find it at www.dca.ca.gov.



New test added to Smog Check

On December 1, 2007, the Bureau of Automotive Repair, one of the entities of the Department of Consumer Affairs, implemented a new test to reduce the amount of smog-forming hydrocarbons released by vehicles into California's air.

The new test checks for leaks in a vehicle's fuel evaporative control system (EVAP). The EVAP system

is designed to capture fuel vapors (hydrocarbons) from the vehicle and keep them from being released into the air. Over time, the EVAP system can degrade and allow hydrocarbon emissions to escape.

Most 1976 to 1995 model-year vehicles will be required to have the new test. If a leak is found in the EVAP system, the vehicle

will fail the test and fail Smog Check. If that happens to your vehicle, you may be eligible for up to \$500 in financial assistance to make the repairs. You may also be eligible for up to \$1,000 to retire your vehicle. To find out if you qualify for either program, contact the Consumer Assistance Program at (866) 272-9642 or visit www.smogcheck.ca.gov.

California appeals waiver rejection

Also in December, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) rejected a waiver request from the State of California that would have allowed the State to set its own tailpipe greenhouse

gas emissions standards. A waiver was necessary because California's standards are stricter than Federal rules. California is suing the EPA for "wrongfully and illegally" blocking the State's

landmark tailpipe greenhouse gas emissions standards. In addition, U.S. Senator Barbara Boxer introduced a bill in January that would direct the EPA to grant California's waiver.

Cars to be inspected for visible smoke

In March, the Bureau of Automotive Repair implemented a new procedure to test vehicles at idle for visible smoke from the tailpipe and crankcase. The visible smoke test, which will

be performed after the tailpipe emissions test, simulates the operating condition of the vehicle when visible smoke is likely to appear. A vehicle that fails the visible smoke test will

fail its Smog Check. Vehicle owners whose cars fail Smog Check may be eligible for repair assistance or vehicle retirement. Visit www.smogcheck.ca.gov for more information.

HOW TO BE A GREEN CONSUMER



Public and private sectors throughout the State have been developing new technologies to help save energy and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. But until these technologies are a reality, Californians can still significantly reduce their energy consumption by using existing products and practices. Many are both inexpensive and easily available. Here are suggestions from various government entities and consumer resources.





TRANSPORTATION

TIP	COST	BENEFIT
Replace your large truck or SUV with a more fuel-efficient vehicle.	Although smaller, fuel-efficient vehicles are less expensive than SUVs, some people fear they are not as safe to drive. The opposite may be true, according to the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS). For details visit www.iihs.org/ratings .	Lower purchase cost, maintenance, taxes, and insurance. Better gas mileage.
Check your vehicle's tire pressure every week.	You can buy a portable air compressor that will plug into your car's cigarette lighter for about \$40.	Tires can lose up to one-half pound of pressure per week, decreasing mileage up to 40 percent, depending on the vehicle.
Change air filters annually or more frequently if needed.	About \$20 to \$60, depending on the vehicle.	Dust and dirt can decrease filter efficiency, lowering your engine's efficiency and reducing gas mileage by as much as 35 percent.





VACATION & TRAVEL

TIP	COST	BENEFIT
Substitute an in-state vacation for foreign travel.	Each year, 14 million visitors from around the world travel to California to experience our vibrant culture and natural wonders. You can do the same for the price of a tank of gas.	No expensive currency exchange rates, departure and arrival taxes, or passport hassles.
Vacation by train.	Train travel may be cheaper, depending on where you visit.	According to the U.N. Council on Climate Change, air travel produces three times more greenhouse gas emissions per passenger mile than train travel.
Take a nonstop flight.	A direct flight will likely cost more than one with several stops.	Shorter travel time and less chance of lost or misdirected luggage. More than 20 percent fuel savings because of fewer landings and take-offs.





HOME HEATING & COOLING

TIP	COST	BENEFIT
Add more insulation if needed. The recommended level for most attics is R-38 (or about 12 to 15 inches, depending on the insulation type). At high elevations, as much as R-49 is recommended.	Cost will depend on how much insulation and sealing you need to add. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Energy Star Program can advise you. Visit www.energystar.gov .	Significantly lower heating costs, depending on how well sealed and insulated your home is now.
Install a programmable thermostat.	A \$50 digital thermostat can pay for itself in energy savings in less than a year.	If you set back the temperature by 10 degrees for eight hours every night, you'll lower your heating bills by 10 percent.
When not in use, close your fireplace flue. Hardware stores sell plugs that effectively seal your chimney.	About \$50, depending on your fireplace.	Less lost heat up the chimney.
Install an attic fan or a whole house fan. Both can help remove hot air from your attic or bring in cooler outside air.	Costs vary. Check with your local utility for information and advice on installation and rebates. If you hire a contractor to install the fan, first check his or her license at the Contractors State Licensing Board's Web site at www.cslb.ca.gov .	Operating an attic fan can save 30 percent on your air conditioning costs.



IN THE KITCHEN

TIP	COST	BENEFIT
Use a toaster oven instead of a full-sized oven.	Variable.	Fifty percent savings in electricity over your full-sized oven. Convection toaster ovens use even less electricity because they cook faster. Example meal, 10 cents.
Prepare a meal in a crockpot.	Variable.	About 7 cents an hour.
Use a microwave oven.	Variable, depending on features.	Uses 20 percent of the energy of a conventional oven, or about 4 cents for a sample meal.
Use high quality reflectors on your electric stove.	Variable, slightly more than standard reflectors.	Reflect one-third more heat, resulting in proportional savings.
Dust or vacuum your refrigerator's condenser coil two to three times a year. Check the door seal; if you can pull a dollar bill through with the door closed, the seal needs replacing. Keep your refrigerator fully stocked to retain a reserve of cool air.	Cost of a replacement seal will vary with the model.	Annual costs to operate your refrigerator will vary with model and size, up to \$200 per year. According to the Bureau of Electronic and Appliance Repair, these tips can save you 10 to 40 percent annually.
Wash a full load in the dishwasher.	Variable. For wash cycle, 30 cents a month; for drying cycle, \$1.80. Using both for 25 hours a month would cost \$2.10.	You'll use 37 percent less energy, which also saves the energy used to deliver and treat the water and the energy to heat it in your home.



GROCERIES

TIP	COST	BENEFIT
<p>Buy locally grown food.</p>	<p>Our State hosts numerous certified farmers' markets that offer fresh produce at reasonable prices. For a list, visit www.cafarmersmarkets.com</p>	<p>Produce is often fresher and cheaper, and buying locally also helps your local farmers.</p>
<p>Replace bottled water with home-filtered water.</p>	<p>Consumers can choose from a wide variety of home water treatment systems. The California Department of Public Health's Division of Drinking Water and Environmental Management has information at www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/Pages/DDWEM.</p>	<p>Home-filtered water is cheaper than bottled water and just as healthy. Using home-filtered water will also help reduce the millions of plastic water bottles that end up in the State's landfills each year.</p>
<p>Use your own bags at the grocery store.</p>	<p>Sturdy, cloth shopping bags are offered through most major market chains for a dollar or two.</p>	<p>Using cloth or canvas bags reduces the \$25 million a year it costs the State to dispose of plastic grocery bags at landfills and saves trees used to make paper bags.</p>





INTERIOR LIGHTING

TIP	COST	BENEFIT
Switch to fluorescent light bulbs. Lighting accounts for as much as 25 percent of household electrical use.	Though frequently discounted by local utilities, fluorescents can cost about \$3.50 each, compared with 50 cents each for a 60-watt incandescent bulb.	Fluorescents last about 10,000 hours or ten times longer than incandescents. Each bulb will save you about \$42.50 in energy costs over its lifetime.



BATHROOM & LAUNDRY

TIP	COST	BENEFIT
Turn off the faucet while brushing your teeth and shaving.	None.	Can save up to 600 gallons of water per month per household.
Install a low-flow shower head and faucet aerator.	Low-flow shower heads cost \$10 to \$45.	Reduces water consumption between 20 and 50 percent.
Install a low-flush toilet. State law will require low-flush toilets in new construction by 2014.	Should cost about the same as a conventional toilet.	Will reduce the amount of water from the current 1.6 gallons to 1.28 gallons per flush, saving the State eight billion gallons of water per year.



Consumer Connection Survey

Welcome to the Department of Consumer Affairs' **Consumer Connection** magazine survey. If you have a few minutes, please take our survey. Data from this survey will be used only to improve future newsletters.

1. How useful was the information in our magazine?

- Very useful
- Somewhat useful
- Neutral
- Not useful

Comments:

2. On a scale of 1–5, with 5 being the best, how would you rate the overall content of the magazine? (circle one)

1 2 3 4 5

Comments:

3. Identify the article(s) you found to be the most valuable.

4. What topics would like to see covered in future issues? (Select all that apply.)

- Medical/health related
- Identity theft
- Auto repair
- Landlord/tenant issues
- Home repair scams
- Other:

5. How would you describe yourself?

- A media representative
- A legislator or legislative staff member
- A member of a consumer group
- A member of the general public
- A staff person from a District Attorney's Office
- A member of a consumer-based organization
- A staff person from a governmental agency
- A Department of Consumer Affairs employee
- Other:

6. Where are you located?

- Los Angeles area
- Orange County
- San Diego
- Riverside/San Bernardino
- Central Valley
- Bay Area
- Northern California
- Sacramento

Thank you for taking the time to answer our survey. Send your survey to:

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Sacramento, CA 95834
or fax to (916) 574-8654



Outreach Calendar

February 2008

12–14

World Ag Expo - 2008

One of the largest agricultural trade shows in the world with more than 1,500 exhibitors from 66 countries. Features agricultural and dairy seminars, an international business center, a new products center, vendors, food, and free consumer information.

Location: 4450 South Laspina Street, Tulare

Web site: www.worldagexpo.com

12–14

Chinese New Year Floral Street Fair

Annual event offers a wide variety of traditional Chinese entertainment, including lion dances, dragon dances, Chinese musical performances, a fireworks show, and martial arts demonstrations

Location: East Garvey Avenue from Garfield Avenue to Alhambra Avenue, in Monterey Park

Web site: www.ci.monterey-park.ca.us/home/index.asp?page=817

March 2008

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Cyber Safe California Summit 2008

Leaders from business, government, law enforcement, education, and community organizations gather for a two-day summit on cyber safety, privacy, and identity theft. Sponsored by the Department of Consumer Affairs, the California Office of Information Security and Privacy Protection, and State and Consumer Services Agency.

Location: Burbank Airport Marriott Hotel & Convention Center, Burbank

Web site: www.cybersafety.ca.gov

14–16

Sonoma County Home & Garden Show

More than 550 exhibits, plus home improvement and garden seminars, and information on consumer protection topics.

Location: Sonoma County Fairgrounds, Santa Rosa

Web site: www.ggshows.com/DisplayPage.asp

28–29

Green Living Expo – Los Angeles

All things green, from Earth-friendly building materials, to the latest in eco-fashion will be featured from more than 150 exhibitors. Information on consumer protection will also be available.

Location: L.A County Fairgrounds, Building 6, Pomona, CA

Web site: www.thegreenlivingexpo.com



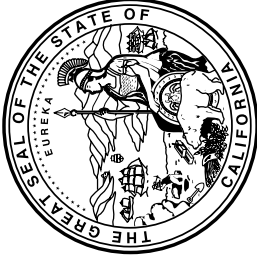
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