

People are a vital part of the Chesapeake Bay ecosystem. Actions we take today can revive the Bay's health tomorrow and into the future.

Use a Clothesline or Drying Rack

Air drying clothes is a simple practice that saves a lot of energy and reduces pollution. This most hum-drum of daily chores, by which we simply hang damp clothes over a line or rack and wait for them to air dry, dramatically reduces a household's energy use and helps to curb climate change.

On average, drying one load of laundry uses three kilowatts of energy, which translates roughly into about three pounds of coal needed to create the electricity for one dryer load.¹ For the vast majority of the world, hang drying is the norm. Hang drying saves a lot energy and a decent amount of money with little effort. Most significantly, its large-scale effects are enormous when it comes to helping the climate.²

What You Can Do to Help

Hang dry your laundry to save energy, reduce costs associated with using a clothes dryer, and help your clothes last longer. When it's sunny and dry you can hang your clothes outside. You can use a folding drying rack or even a shower curtain rod to dry items inside. Even just getting into the habit of hanging one load of laundry a week will reduce your energy use significantly.

Changing Perceptions

How people think about energy-intensive appliances, including clothes dryers, is changing. In 2006, 83% of respondents to a Pew Research Center survey said a clothes dryer was a necessity. In 2010, when the survey was repeated, that figure dropped to 59%. About one-third of Americans have figured out that it takes a lot of energy to run a dryer—all to do something that our great-grandparents knew that the air and a little more time, could do for free. In many other countries, this wisdom is more widely shared, and drying clothes on a clothesline, or a rack, is the norm.³

Here are some of the benefits of using a clothesline or drying rack to dry your laundry.



Figure 1

<https://www.google.com/url?sa=i&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.pinterest.com%2Fsnouqualmiegal%2Fclothesline-laundry-cart%2F&psig=AOvVaw06olE31UsrC87uQaAbSKJg&ust=1610754144225000&source=images&cd=vfe&ved=0CAIQjRxqFwoTCIjw5fzMnO4CFQAAAAdAAAAABAJ>

¹ <https://www.opb.org/news/article/solar-advocates-oregon-hang-dry-clothes-climate-change-energy/>

² <https://www.greenlivingpdx.com/hang-drying-revolution/>

³ <https://www.greenamerica.org/green-living/ditch-your-dryer>

1. Saves energy and curbs climate change.

Line drying laundry conserves energy and helps to protect the environment by saving precious fossil fuels.

There are more than 90 million clothes dryers in the United States, according to the Association of Home Appliance Manufacturers. The average dryer accounts for 6% of a household's energy use.⁴ Air-drying clothes can reduce the average household's carbon footprint by a whopping 2,400 pounds a year. Experts determined that if all Americans line-dried clothing for just half of a year, it would reduce U.S. household carbon emissions by 3.3%.⁵

2. Reduces the use of chemicals.

Line drying clothes and sheets eliminates use of additional chemical laundry fresheners like dryer sheets and fabric softener. Both types of products contain chemicals known to be toxic to people after sustained exposure. Some of the most harmful ingredients in dryer sheets and liquid fabric softener include chemicals are linked to different cancers, respiratory issues, and nervous system disorders.⁶

3. Helps clothes last longer.

Tossing and tumbling in a dryer can cause wear and strain on clothing fabric due to stress on seams and snags from buttons and zippers. Excessively high heat in the dryer can ruin some fabrics and cause irreversible damage. Washing clothes less frequently reduces energy consumption and helps them last longer. When clothes break down, we replace them, and this process happens much faster with improper care and 'fast fashion' low quality fabrics. The process of making one cotton t-shirt emits about 5 kilograms of carbon dioxide — around the amount produced during a 12-mile car drive. It also uses as much as 1,750 liters of water.⁷ That's in part because cotton is a water-guzzling crop. Inefficient irrigation, as well as the bleaching and dying process, add to the water usage

Websites for More Information

- Green America – [5 Reasons to Ditch Your Dryer](#)
- Green Living Portland – [Hang Drying Revolution](#)
- Your Future Is On the Line [Clothesline Work Party](#)



Figure 2
<https://www.sacmag.com/916/the-dirt-on-laundry/?fbclid=IwAR2csdhBT1Mbs4eKEJe4YcXbY-oetC6Kc2Rg8JClxjgCRMaNVuRXdYtzlaU>

⁴ <https://www.sacmag.com/916/the-dirt-on-laundry/?fbclid=IwAR2csdhBT1Mbs4eKEJe4YcXbY-oetC6Kc2Rg8JClxjgCRMaNVuRXdYtzlaU>

⁵ <https://www.thespruce.com/reasons-to-line-dry-laundry-2145997>

⁶ <https://www.ewg.org/enviroblog/2016/05/skip-fabric-softeners>

⁷ <https://www.cnn.com/2020/05/03/business/cheap-clothing-fast-fashion-climate-change-intl/index.html>

Behavior Change Campaign Examples

It is common to find it challenging overcome the barriers to air dry clothing. These barriers include:

- **Time.** Having the time to hang clothes and allow them to dry is a concern for many.
- **Space.** Some people might not feel that they have the space to hang up clothing to air dry, or there might be Homeowners' Association Rules or condominium regulations that do not allow hanging clothing outside.
- **Values, beliefs and motivation.** Believing this single action matters and has an impact on protecting the environment is motivating.

❖ Solar Oregon – Hang Dry Your Clothes for Climate Change Campaign

Solar Oregon hosted the week-long [Hang Dry Your Clothes for Climate Change](#) campaign in 2019. The campaign encouraged Oregonians to hang dry their laundry through the following actions:

- Social Media: Encouraged people to post pictures to social media with a #hangdry hashtag to calculate the energy people saved altogether. (**Social Diffusion**)
 - “Take a picture of your laundry drying at home and post it to social media and help us start a clean energy movement!”
- Share Examples: The campaign manager shared a person story from his experience living in Italy. He learned that only 3% of Italian households own a clothes dryers, compared to 80% in the U.S. Americans' clothes-drying habits represent up to 2% of our annual energy use. (**Social Norm**)
- Host Event: Solar Oregon partnered with Spin Laundry Lounge to host an event called “Hang Dry Your Clothes for Climate Change” with discounted washing and free hang drying, as well as games, snacks and fun activities.



Figure 3 <https://www.opb.org/news/article/solar-advocates-oregon-hang-dry-clothes-climate-change-energy/>

❖ Living the Change – Commitment Tool

[Living the Change](#) is an international, multi-faith initiative focused on changing personal consumption habits as one response to the #ClimateEmergency. They are inviting people to focus on the personal habit changes that have the biggest impact: transport, diet, and home energy use.

- Within the Commitment Tool, users can commit to “Air-dry my clothes instead of using a dryer machine.” **(Commitment)**
 - Messaging: Air-drying your clothes can save about as much carbon pollution as recycling your glass, plastic, and paper goods. If you care about recycling, consider no longer using a dryer machine.

The screenshot displays the Living the Change website. At the top, there are three portraits of faith leaders and a headline: "How Faith Leaders From Around the World Live the Change" by the Living the Change Team. Below this, a section titled "The 3 Priorities of Climate-Friendly Living" features three icons: wind turbines for "Reducing ENERGY use", bicycles for "Eco-friendly TRANSPORT", and a plant-based diet for "Plant-based DIET". Each icon includes a brief description of its impact on CO2 emissions. The bottom half of the page is a green "MAKE A CHANGE TODAY" form with fields for First Name, Last Name, My Email, My Tradition, and United States. It also includes a "Postal / Zip Code" field, a "FIND SUGGESTIONS HERE" button, and a "MAKE MY COMMITMENT" button. There are two checkboxes for permissions: one for storing and using data, and one for sharing the pledge.

Example Messages

1. **Our future is on the line. Clothesline drying helps save the planet.** Give the Earth a break by air-drying your clothes. Help slow down climate change by getting your friends and family to air dry their clothes – instead of using fossil fuel gas or coal-run electric dryers.
2. **Fight climate change with your undies!** Give the earth a break by air-drying your clothes, including your undies. Help slow down climate change by getting your friends and family to air dry their clothes – instead of using fossil fuel gas or coal-run electric dryers.
3. **Love (for the planet) is on the line.** Show your love for the planet by taking your clothes out of the wash and hanging them to air dry, indoors or out.

The above messages could be used in various outreach strategies with your congregation, such as the following:

1. **Hang dry clothes based on your schedule.** You don't need to hang dry all of your laundry to see the benefits. If time is a driver, then hang dry half your laundry or one basket instead of all of it. Share information with your congregation in a newsletter or on your website on the benefits of hang drying.

- Include testimonials from members of the congregation regarding how they have addressed the “time” barrier.
 - Example Excerpt: According to Joe Wachunas of Oregon Solar, the primary reason people use a clothes dryer is to save time. But for the vast majority of the world’s population, including most of the leading economies, air-drying clothes is not that much of a daily encumbrance or drag on productivity. “On average, I’ve found that each load of line-dried laundry takes **approximately eight minutes of extra work**. Since I do about two loads a day, this involves about 15 minutes of extra work a day. That’s 15 minutes to reduce my home’s energy use by 20%, and to keep 2000 pounds of coal in the ground. That seems like an incredible bang for my buck when I’m looking for small ways to make the world better for my daughters.”⁸
- Include a quote or text to help people connect the behavior to the impact. For example, "I timed myself on like 10 different laundry loads and it was just eight extra minutes than just using the dryer," Joe Wachunas of Oregon Solar explained. "You're saving anywhere from three pounds of CO2 (the equivalent of three pounds of coal) per load and for my family that does a lot of laundry, that's about a ton of CO2 a year. That's just a small thing I can do to save a ton of energy."⁹

⁸ <https://www.greenlivingpdx.com/hang-drying-revolution/>

⁹ <https://www.kgw.com/article/news/local/oregonians-hang-dry-to-help-climate/283-306d830f-7ccb-46bf-832c-c8ca600a1ff3>