

MOTIVATING HOME ENERGY ACTION

Fact sheet 4 - Encouraging action with information strategies

Information strategies can be used to determine:

- the nature of the environmental or energy problem
- behaviours and/or actions required to resolve the problem, and
- steps required to carry out the behaviour or action.

Remember that information by itself rarely motivates action. Home energy action information is often seen in a negative light and may not be believed by your target audience.

WHAT ARE THE ESSENTIAL FEATURES OF INFORMATION STRATEGIES?

When used to help motivate action, information strategies must:

- grab householders' attention
- be easy to understand
- be vivid, concrete and personalised, and
- be seen to come from a trustworthy and expert source

Vague messages like 'save energy' are ineffective. Information that explains exactly what the decision-maker needs to do is effective.

Successful information-based programs:

- take householders' concerns seriously
- communicate the range of benefits that the energy-saving technology will provide
- take into account householders' limited experience in the energy field
- address householders' concerns and provide additional education strategies where required, and
- clearly identify costs for householders.

WHAT DO I INCLUDE IN MY INFORMATION STRATEGY?

Environmental reasons to save energy

Information on the environmental importance of saving energy will not motivate many householders to take energy actions, but it may boost support for energy action programs.

Focus on the cost of energy lost, not the savings to be achieved by its conservation

A potential loss is much more likely to motivate householder action than a promise of how much they could save by installing an energy saving device.

Focus on a very specific energy action

An experiment found signs asking university students to turn out the lights had no effect - lights were still left on 95 per cent of the time. Signs asking students to turn out the lights after 5pm resulted in lights being left on only 40 per cent of the time.

Make energy visible

Energy-saving features of homes and new technology are often invisible (for example, insulation and passive solar design). Displays that make invisible energy use visible may motivate energy action.

TYPES OF INFORMATION STRATEGIES

There are several types of information strategies which can be adapted to suit your audience. Refer to the *Motivating Home Energy Action* handbook for more detailed information.

Conduct a media or advertising campaign

If public awareness about energy issues is high, information is more likely to result in energy action.

- use media or advertising to create awareness
- design an effective advertising campaign

Promote energy efficiency labels

Energy efficiency labels may motivate householders to purchase the more energy-efficient products.

- choose which products to label
- choose an effective labelling strategy

Hold energy efficiency displays

Displays of energy efficient products, technologies and techniques can communicate information vividly.

- use display homes
- use in-store displays



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Fact sheet 4 - Encouraging action with information strategies (continued)

Conduct energy and greenhouse audits

Information received in face-to-face interaction *does* influence decision-makers.

- conduct an audit
- identify the qualities needed in home auditors
- hold an audit for consumers at a hardware store

Give feedback on energy use

Feedback techniques are an attempt to inform householders about what energy saving actions are saving them energy. Feedback can result in a 15 to 20 per cent reduction in energy use - and as high as a 30 per cent reduction when combined with incentives.

- select the type of feedback required
- make your feedback effective

Hold workshops

Workshops offer the potential for hands-on learning and can reach a much larger number of people if they are run as part of another meeting or workshop.

- cooperate with a home maintenance or home improvement workshop run by a hardware store or adult education centre
- use community group meetings

Use video to demonstrate home energy action

Video communication can be more effective in motivating home energy action than written communication alone.

- include vision of householders demonstrating energy actions

Use social networks

Householders are more likely to notice the information, evaluate it favourably, understand and remember it when they receive that information from other householders.

- use community groups to spread information effectively

HOW DO I EVALUATE MY STRATEGY?

In-depth interviews and surveys provide poor information on what householders have done differently as a result of an information strategy.

It's better to obtain accurate information on the actual consumption of energy before and after the information program. Comparing program participants with households not served by the program is an excellent way to assess the success of an information strategy.

COOL communities are wise communities

