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Sarasota County takes ENERGY STAR Challenge to improve energy efficiency

In keeping with its proactive approach toward sustainability and the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, Sarasota County has taken the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) ENERGY STAR Challenge.

Launched by EPA in 2005, the ENERGY STAR Challenge calls for at least a 10 percent reduction in energy usage for the more than 5 million commercial and industrial buildings in the United States. The action to improve the efficiency of county buildings comes two years after Sarasota County accepted the 2030 challenge to design all new construction and building renovations to use one-half the fossil fuel energy currently permitted by the U.S. Department of Energy.

According to EPA, burning fossil fuels to generate energy also produces greenhouse gases that contribute to climate change. The EPA estimates that 45 percent of U.S. greenhouse gas emissions are caused by buildings and industrial facilities, making more efficient use of energy the best starting point for reducing the nation's carbon footprint and saving money.

"Many of us are taking steps to improve energy efficiency at home but may not realize that there are opportunities to save where we work, shop, play and learn, as well," said Sarasota County Energy Coordinator Gary Patton. "By making energy-efficient choices, we can reduce our energy use and save taxpayers' money while protecting the environment."

The EPA estimates that if the energy efficiency of commercial and industrial buildings in the U.S. improved by 10 percent, Americans would reduce greenhouse gas emissions equal to those from about 30 million vehicles, while saving about \$20 billion.

"The Challenge is a win-win for us and other local governments looking to save energy and improve their bottom line," Patton said. "ENERGY STAR provides the tools and resources to help identify areas for improving energy efficiency and to develop a strategic energy management plan."

ENERGY STAR, a voluntary program backed by the federal government, sets standards for superior energy efficiency in buildings, products, and services. To date, more than 30,000 commercial and industrial buildings have used ENERGY STAR tools to identify opportunities for energy efficiency improvements and more than 3,200 of these buildings have earned the ENERGY STAR rating, including Sarasota County's Judicial Center.

For more information about Sarasota County's energy management plan, contact the Sarasota County Call Center at 941-861-5000 and ask for the Energy Coordinator.

Media note: Sources for the facts shown above have been provided by ENERGY STAR.

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