

Reducing Our Carbon Footprint

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Reducing Carbon Emissions

I am a global warming alarmist, and as such, it would be specious of me not to take action to reduce my carbon footprint. So . . . I hang my laundry outside (as long as it will get above freezing). I set my thermostat to 65°. My major appliances are set to run on electric off-peak hours, including my whole house fan, which is my only form of air conditioning. Believe it or not, there are immediate benefits to these actions. My husband's gym clothes smell wonderful, I keep moving in the winter and I structure my days around a late day swim in the summer. Additionally, the monetary result of using mostly off-peak power is that we pay less to the utility company! The only carbon reduction resolution that has cramped my style: my rule of thumb not to drive anywhere unless I can accomplish three things.

As my most recent car reaches the end of its viable life (10 years and counting), I am excited to acquire an all-electric car. Since I have always driven Audi, I reserved my all-electric vehicle the night of the Audi e-tron launch party. While waiting for my new e-tron to arrive, I gave thought to how I was going to charge this car. What made me decide to install a "solar system" was an article I read in Popular Mechanics that said the fastest payback for solar roof panels was to use the power to charge an electric vehicle. This is logical to me, as gas is a more expensive source of energy than electricity or heating oil. The added benefit: charging my car on electrons from the sun will be carbon neutral.

Moving Beyond an EV

We had other objectives as well. After experiencing 6 powerless days in the wake of Sandy, we wanted an emergency backup system, and we knew that we might not always be home during the day to take advantage of the sun. We approached Solar City and sized a Power Wall and solar panel system to meet our bare bones needs, both for the house and “generator” (the power walls). The only bummer: we must power the Level Two charger that we installed from the grid, as the power draw will overwhelm the solar and battery system. But most of our day-to-day electric car charging needs can be addressed with Level One charging, which we can get from the solar cells.

While looking into all these options, we were lucky enough to come across the Electric Vehicle Club, where we are able to compare notes and get up to date information from other club members who are also convinced that electric cars are the way of the future. Many members have their own path toward sustainability, and it is great to hear the new ideas! Many members have had their electric cars for years and it is great to hear that they are still enthusiastic.

We have almost completed installation, and my e-tron is on its way! The Tesla installers were clean, courteous, and professional. I look forward to updating the saga with facts and figures once we get an idea of how the system runs.