

Natural Resources and Energy (cont.)

be required to transport the raw materials from the point of extraction to the place of final use.

The careful purchasing and avoidance of unnecessary packaging, that helped produce only one small bag of trash, would also lead to indirect resource savings. Refusing to buy environmentally unfriendly goods results in the demand for these products decreasing. Businesses only sell items that make a profit. If a product does not sell, retailers will deem it unprofitable and no longer order it. The manufacturer is now forced to either change the product or package to meet the demands of the buying public or risk going out of business. In the case of packaging the producer might lessen the number of times an item is wrapped, switch to a recycled and recyclable container or offer the option of buying the merchandise in bulk. Therefore, trees and other resources used in packaging or manufacturing processes are saved by simply using your freedom of choice.

What our indirect influences do is not always obvious. Reducing the need for virgin resources, caused by overconsumption and not purchasing reused or recycled goods, means less holes in the planet where ores would have been mined. Trees that provide the oxygen we all breathe are left standing, instead of lying in landfills as boxes, bags, and paper. Forests can continue to house animals, stop soil erosion and replenish the Earth's nutrients. Energy sources are retained for future generations. Pollution from manufacturing, the use of energy and other human activities is lessened.

A person's indirect influence is similar to a line of dominoes. Knocking over the first piece does not tip the last domino, but the initial action triggers the second to fall, which leads the third to topple and so on until the final domino drops. The only problem is, someone has to act in a way that will affect the first in line.

Direct results can be seen in the reduction of energy and water usage. Most of the energy the world uses comes from non-renewable resources, especially *fossil fuels*. A smaller degree is generated through the use of renewable resources. Regardless, the consumption of energy is now at a critical point. Traditional sources are becoming increasingly difficult to locate and extract. More importantly, the burning of fossil fuels in automobiles, ships, aircraft, coal fired generators and even home furnaces has polluted the atmosphere. Renewable sources of energy, such as solar, wind, tidal, *biomass*, hydroelectric and geothermal may bring their own environmental hazards. Climate, vegetation and irrigation patterns of the Earth are in jeopardy of being radically altered.

Reducing the demand for energy is the best answer. The first place to start is in the kitchen. The appliances found here on average use 53% of the total electrical energy in a home. Over the life of the six major kitchen appliances (oven, range, microwave oven, refrigerator, freezer and dishwasher), nearly 3,000 dollars can be saved in electricity if the most energy efficient models, available today, are used.

When preparing food use a microwave oven. Not only is it faster, but the oven uses less than half the energy of a normal range. An electric frying pan is better than using the stove top. If a million homes used the electric pan, instead of the stove, for all their frying needs, enough power would be saved to supply all the energy an average community college uses in one year.