

Environmentally Sustainable Activities and Events: Reducing Energy Use at Events

With the increase in awareness and impacts of climate change, we all need to do as much as possible to reduce our contribution to global warming through reducing our greenhouse emissions. With this in mind, the event sector is well placed to play a positive role in reducing the rate and severity of climate change. Organisers can reduce the amount of energy used at events and also play a role in educating the public and raising awareness for sustainability issues.

There are a number of simple things to take into consideration when planning your event that can contribute to a less energy intensive event and make your event safe, friendly, healthy and enjoyable for participants.

Avoid and reduce unnecessary energy use:

Avoid:

The best way to save energy is to not use it in the first place. That means avoiding the unnecessary use of energy by doing things like:

- Think creatively about the space you are using. Are there large lights that don't need to be on? Are there many lights on in one room or area unnecessarily? Can alternatives be employed like lamps? Creative lighting alternatives can create a better atmosphere for your event.
- You can also use sensible, low (and 'no') – intensive means of keeping people cool in events in the hotter months. This is when electricity is at its most expensive. Supply fans, cool water and drinks.
- When choosing your event site, look for a site with good natural passive cooling in the summer months. For instance, an event in a grassed park under trees will be cooler than an event in a heat radiating car park. If you can keep temperatures down to begin with, you will cut down on the need for other means of cooling such as fans and air conditioners that use power.

Use less:

Let's face it; we have to use energy for running events. But we don't have to use as much as we often do. Here are a few ideas for reducing the amount of energy you use at an event:

- Check with your lighting supplier for the availability of LED (Light Emitting Diode) stage lighting. LED lights use around a quarter the energy of traditional incandescent light globes and they look amazing too! New generation LED lights are readily available at most major lighting companies.
- Realistically size the generators you will need. Many events get huge generators that are massively oversized for the purpose they are needed for. This can be a large waste of fuel, an unnecessary cost and detract from the quality of the air in your event area.
- If possible, source a bio-diesel generator for your needs. Ask your generator supplier in the region about availability. The more people who ask for them, the more likely suppliers will look to satisfy consumer demand. At the moment, bio-diesel generators can be difficult to find. Perhaps ask your local council for assistance in finding suppliers in your region.
- Encourage the use of compact fluorescent light globes (CFL's) for stalls at your event and venue. If you can, distribute them and make them available for stall holders to install. This could be a great way to get them to try CFL's and make a change from incandescent.

- For events at night that need paths to be lit, use solar lighting – its easier as you don't need to connect them to a centralised power source; and safer as people won't trip on chords (see the Wave Rock example above). A one off purchase can be a valuable investment for annual events.
- Use fans to cool areas where existing air conditioning systems may be ineffective and wasteful.
- In the cooler months, use gas heating instead of electricity where you can. Gas is a lot less greenhouse intensive than electricity.

Public Transport:

Provide transport alternatives for people travelling to and from your event which avoid unnecessary emissions from people travelling in cars.

- Choose a site with good public transport access.
- Parking and traffic can be a major hassle with events. Be creative and reward those who assist you in making your event less congested, healthier and safer by riding, walking and catching public transport.
- Provide drinks, food and encouragement for active transportees so they'll be inclined to take such options again.
- Promote public transport options by giving out maps and timetables with tickets and programs.
- If possible, try to arrange a subsidy for public transport tickets or include public transport in the ticket price. Some large events have made concert tickets valid for public transport.
- Provide infrastructure provisions for bikes such as a safe and secure lock up close to the venue.
- When you're on site setting up in the days and weeks before the event, supply bikes for people to get around the site to avoid driving. It's safer too.

Promotion and Publicity:

It's not just the event itself that uses energy; there are core aspects of events such as printing and publicity that also use energy too. The choices made as an event organiser such as opting to reduce printed publicity and using environmentally friendly supplier's impacts on the carbon emissions of your event. With this in mind:

- Limit unnecessary paper production for publicity.
- Use electronic adverts and print media instead of large poster runs. This also cuts down on the transport emissions of distributing posters for the event.
- Source a resource efficient and waste wise printer for publicity where possible.

Waste in relation to GHG production:

Greenhouse gas emissions from waste arise from the decomposition of degradable organic materials such as paper, food scraps, plant waste, timber and other organic materials. When organic waste from events such as paper, food and plant waste are taken to landfill they are generally buried causing the waste to break down 'anaerobically'. Anaerobic decomposition' (decay without exposure to oxygen) generates methane (CH₄), a greenhouse gas 21 times more potent than CO₂. If organic waste wasn't put into landfills and degraded naturally with oxygen, it would do so via 'aerobic decay' (such as via worm farms or compost heaps, or when mulch lies in the sun) giving off only CO₂. CO₂ produced under these conditions is considered part of the natural carbon cycle, and so these emissions are not considered to contribute to climate change. Therefore, when you are planning your event, ensure that you avoid all organic waste going to landfill so it can break down naturally and avoid the unnecessary creation of potent greenhouse gases.

Act(s) Local:

Use as much local infrastructure and services as you can as it reduces transport emissions and supports the local economy. Local artists, performers, caterers and suppliers means that there is less transport emissions associated with your event as they will travel less distance to get to the event.