

MARBLEHEAD REPORTER

Heeding the call: What you can do now to fight climate change

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On Monday, April 11, Marblehead's church bells rang at 11 a.m. for 11 minutes to signify the 11th-hour need to take action on climate change. They will do so again on May 11 and then on the 11th of every month until the message is heard.

The latest International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report, which warned that time is running out to take action on climate change, prompted Marblehead's houses of worship to ring the alarm bells. We must heed their call and take action to end our dependency on fossil fuels – if not for ourselves, then for our children and grandchildren. It's not too late.

According to the IPCC report, we have the knowledge and tools to cut global greenhouse gas emissions in half by 2030. This outlook is much more positive because of the tremendous reductions in the cost of clean energy technologies. But broad individual and governmental action is needed to make this happen. The time to act is now.

While the war in Ukraine has caused other alarm bells to ring, it has also highlighted our dependency on foreign oil and gas. This is an opportunity for us to create a clean energy future for our children and grandchildren and become truly energy independent. Let's use it.

Here at Sustainable Marblehead, we are big believers in thinking globally but acting locally. So, where to begin? Here are three things you can do that will make a big difference in reducing your carbon footprint and putting us on a path to clean energy:

- 1. Sign up for the Marblehead Municipal Light Department's "Go Green Now" program.**

This new program is for Marblehead electricity customers (that's all of us) who want 100% carbon-free electricity now. Check it out at <https://marbleheadelectric.com/go-green-now.html>. By participating in the program, we help MMLD secure more carbon-free energy by paying an average monthly surcharge of \$14.56 based on an average bill of 662 kilowatt-

hours of electricity used (2.2 cents per kilowatt-hour). Homeowners using more electricity pay more; homeowners using less electricity pay less. The Go Green Now program allows individuals to completely eliminate their own carbon footprint while also sending a strong message to the Light Department and Light Board that we want MMLD to purchase more clean energy now.

2. Replace your oil or gas heating system with an air source heat pump.

Nearly 45% of Marblehead's carbon emissions come from the oil and gas we use to heat our homes. Air source heat pumps are extremely efficient all-in-one heating and cooling units that work by drawing heat from the outside air in the winter and expelling hot air outside in the summer. They can completely replace your home heating system or be used in combination with your existing gas or oil furnace. They use significantly less electricity than traditional air conditioners and can reduce your utility bills by 30% to 40%. You can use existing air ducts in your home or install ductless "mini-splits" that make retrofits easy. These systems consist of an outdoor unit (heat pump) connected to one to four indoor air handler units (mini splits); one indoor unit for each room or zone. Mass Save® is offering incentives of up to \$10,000 for whole-house conversions from gas heating. Learn more at <https://www.masssave.com/saving/residential-rebates/heat-pump>. MMLD heat pump incentives are described <https://marbleheadelectric.com/rebates-incentives.html>.

3. Replace your gas-burning car or truck with an electric vehicle.

Since nearly 30% of Marblehead's carbon emissions come from the cars and trucks we drive, consider buying or leasing an electric vehicle or plug-in hybrid. Both the number of models and the total number of EVs now available on the market have increased dramatically and costs have come down. Visit <https://www.marbleheadelectric.com/ev-vehicles-chargers.html> for current incentives on electric vehicles and chargers. If you're unable to charge at home, be aware that MMLD has installed six public chargers at locations throughout town, including two chargers in the Light Department parking lot on Commercial Street, two chargers on Round House Road behind Warwick Place, and two chargers in the Mary Alley Municipal Building parking lot. Many municipalities and businesses are also installing public chargers so that EV owners can charge more easily on the go, and both the state and federal governments are considering additional investments in charging stations.

A typical Marblehead household emits 20 tons of carbon a year. These actions – signing up for the "Go Green Now" program (eliminating 2 tons of emissions), modifying your heating system (converting from oil eliminates 7 tons of carbon; converting from gas eliminates 5

tons of carbon) or making the change to an electric vehicle (eliminating 3.5 tons of carbon) – will make a real difference in our community’s total greenhouse gas emissions and help us meet Marblehead’s goal of net-zero emissions by 2040. These decisions are in your hands.

As always, we stand ready to help you navigate our new clean energy future. If you have questions or need help, our Clean Energy and Public Policy Working Group members are standing by to assist. Just email us at cleanenergy@sustainablemarblehead.org and visit our website at www.sustainablemarblehead.org for more ideas. We can do this!