



Toward an Environmental Conscience: The *GreenCode* for Filmmakers

by Professor Larry Engel, © 2007

Some steps to take in the field or on location to help the planet:

1. **Water.** Stop drinking bottled water. Drink tap water, filtered if you wish. Use nalgene bottles or camelback/platypus sacks. Bottled water is ridiculous. It's not regulated so you don't really know what's in it or where it came from. The plastic bottles are not recycled in most places. The price of producing the bottles is high in terms of energy and therefore CO2 costs. And transportation of the bottles is an additional unnecessary cost to you and to the environment. Worse case, buy gallon jugs and refill nalgene bottles or one bottle per person -- use a sharpie to label names.

2. **Snacks.** Buy bulk. Packaging is a huge cost and a considerable environmental horror. Pack snacks for crew in re-useable zip-lock sacks or re-sealable containers. Label each with crew names for easy id and reuse. A note on sharing food and water: It's a really bad idea because it's the fastest way to spread disease on set. Keep your hands clean and out of other people's food. If there's shared food, use utensils or pour -- don't reach and grab with your hands.

3. **Litter - Don't.** It's really easy to toss stuff -- on the ground, in the car, anywhere. And for those who smoke, yuck. Nothing like cleaning up cigarette butts that litter a location. Set up two garbage bags at all locations including the car/van. One for trash; one for recycling. If you roll up or fold trash it compacts into a smaller volume than if you just toss it or compress it in your hand and throw it away.

4. **Lights and electricity.** We usually use more electricity than most folks. Lights running, batteries charging. How can we save electrons and therefore carbon emissions? There are several ways to save. One: don't leave tungsten bulbs on when off-set. Save them and bring the house lights back up. You can also shut them off between takes if there's going to be a delay of a few minutes. This also helps to cool down the room. HMI lights are a bit different. It's not a good idea to save them; once up, they should be left on. The reason is that it takes a lot of electricity to spark the light when it's hot. In all cases, make sure the lights are off when you move them. And remember that hot bulbs break easily from shocks -- so go gently

with them. Also, use heavy gauge stingers (extension cables) because the heavier the gauge the more easily electrons run through it thus saving effort.

5. **Batteries.** When using expendable batteries I recommend using lithium batteries (AA and 9V in particular). While they are at least twice as much as regular alkaline batteries they last in flashlights, mixers, microphones, and transmitter/receivers at least four times as long. Most importantly, don't simply toss batteries into the trash -- find a way to recycle. You can also use rechargeable batteries but they don't work as well as others.

6. **Vehicles and Gas.** Don't keep vehicles idling at location. Turn them off. Besides, unloading and loading gear at the back of a minivan with the exhaust spewing stuff is not the nicest way to spend time.

Try not to use the AC. It's a bad idea anyway for camera and sound gear -- can create condensation, and during filming the fan is noisy.

7. **Tape versus Tapeless.** I know it's a little weird but here's the deal. Running tape uses more power than does recording directly to hard drives or discs and dvd's (P2, XD, SD, etc. systems). Less mechanical movement draws less current from batteries. Therefore you don't have to recharge batteries as often with tapeless systems. A small savings. When shooting on expeditions consider solar panels if there enough daylight.

8. **Canned Air.** Forget it. I haven't used compressed air in several years and don't miss it. Even though claims are that the new cans don't emit ozone-eating chemicals, they're still chemicals that don't need to be added to our atmosphere. Use an air syringe (get one that has a clean intake valve rather than one you can buy at the drug store). Also make sure that you have a camel hair lens brush and a micro cloth to round out cleaning lenses and filters. Use a stiff paint brush to clean gear.

To be continued....