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Friday, December 18, 2009

Study: Reducing natural gas consumption would help Md.

Baltimore Business Journal - by [Tierney Plumb](#) Washington Business Journal

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Maryland would benefit economically and environmentally if it helped homeowners cut down on natural gas consumption, according to a new **University of Maryland** study.

If the state assisted in buying energy-efficient natural gas furnaces and water heaters, as well as upgrading insulation, over a 10-year period there would be 80,000 new jobs and \$11 billion in economic activity, as well as a 9-percent slash in carbon emissions. Nearly half of Maryland homes are heated with natural gas.

“You might call this ‘cash-for-clunkers’ home-style,” said Matthias Ruth, director of the school’s Center for Integrative Environmental Research and principal investigator of the study. “Trading in your clunker of a furnace or heater can make good economic and

environmental sense for everyone concerned.”

The Maryland Department of the Environment commissioned the study in 2007, and CIER worked in partnership with **Johns Hopkins University**, the **University of California**, Merced, and **Towson University** to complete it.

Research found that an average single-family household could save \$400 to \$500 in natural gas bills the first year by investing approximately \$3,000 in such products as wall insulation, duct sealing, furnaces, water heaters and pipe wrap.

State incentives to entice homeowners to buy the most energy-efficient furnaces and water heaters and to make recommended home efficiency upgrades would spur the creation of more than 80,000 jobs, especially in the construction field, and create nearly \$11 billion in economic activity.

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Cutting down on natural gas consumption would help Maryland meet its recently set 2020 greenhouse gas emissions reduction goals. Through the proposed initiative in the study, residential emissions would fall by more than 10 million tons over the next decade, or about 9 percent.

Researchers used economic projection tools to come up with economic and environmental impacts under varying climate and appliance standards scenarios.

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