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Report Touts Benefits Of Telecommuting; Workers Save Gas, Reduce Carbon Emissions

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Telecommuting saves 840 million gallons of gas a year, reducing greenhouse-gas emissions by nearly 14 million metric tons, a study released Wednesday found.

The study, done by Tiax of Cambridge, Mass., for the Consumer Electronics Association, studied the impact of telecommuting and electronic commerce on greenhouse-gas emissions. There are an estimated 3.9 million telecommuters in the United States, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration's Residential Energy Consumption Survey.

The average savings for a worker from one day of telecommuting was 220 to 320 megajoules of energy and 1.4 gallons of gasoline, reducing carbon-dioxide emissions by 17 to 23 kilograms.

The study does look at energy use in the homes of telecommuters, which increases slightly, but it also assumes that businesses can reduce floor space and thus cut energy and lighting costs by having fewer workers in offices.

"The use of electronics is preventing greenhouse-gas emissions and reducing fossil fuel consumption," Gary Shapiro, president and chief executive of the CEA, said in a statement. The group is a trade association for 2,100 companies in the \$148-billion-a-year electronics industry.

The report uses a joule as its energy measurement unit. One joule can power a one-watt light bulb for one second. A megajoule is enough electricity to run a desktop computer and a 17-inch monitor for 30 minutes.