



Go Ahead - Turn it off!

As I am sure many of the overseas readers of these stories know, we are having quite a problem with electricity supply here in Japan these days. It will take decades to recover from the damage to the Fukushima nuclear power station after the massive earthquake and tsunami, and in the new climate of enhanced safety precautions for such stations, many others around the country have been shut down for checks and testing, with the result that the power companies cannot supply enough electricity to match demand.

So the word has gone out - to both industry and the private sector - that consumption must be reduced. The most common numbers we see are in the 15~20% range; if we can reduce our electricity usage by this amount, the power companies should be able to maintain adequate supply, and there will be no need for further blackouts of the type that we experienced in the immediate aftermath of the disaster.

Now 15 to 20% must be a very difficult target for a major company to meet, as (for example) a train company can't simply cancel 20% of the trains they run, but for individuals it doesn't sound too bad, and pretty much everybody here is ready and eager to comply.

Governments though (at different levels, both national and local) certainly aren't leaving it to chance, and have come up with various methods to promote the conservation efforts. Ads are running on many kinds of media offering advice and guidance on how to save electricity, and there are even contests set up where you can measure your current consumption against your previous levels, and receive prizes and awards for succeeding.

Our electricity bills are being altered to provide us with year-on-year comparative data to help us reach these goals, and all in all, there really is no excuse for anybody not to cooperate with these efforts. This is clearly a time to 'pull together'.

There is only one problem ... I can't do it.

I've looked at the charts, and read through all the suggestions on how to reduce my consumption, and quite simply, can't do it. Turn down (up) the air conditioner? I don't have one. Turn off the TV when it's not in use? I don't have one. Clean up the refrigerator and toss out all the unneeded leftovers? My fridge is almost completely bare anyway. Turn out the lights when I am not in a room? I've always done that.

Honestly speaking, I don't see how I can reduce my electricity usage by anything other than a trivial amount. There is no way that I can meet this 15% target!

Our community association has already passed around a notice to everybody that they are going to encourage people to share their data and 'compete' for prizes, some of which are quite substantial. I am quite sure that most of my neighbours will be able to show significant cuts in their electricity usage. I, on the other hand, will perhaps appear to be 'un-cooperative'.

All I can hope is that when the comparisons are being made, people will look at the overall level of consumption, and not just at the amount of reduction from prior levels. On that score, I think I will do well. For a four-story building - which contains both residence and business - I think my usage is very low indeed. Given that my main printmaking activity is done with no mechanical assistance whatsoever, I guess this is not surprising.

And that brings me to the single place where I *could* make a reduction from previous years. I could turn off my computer.

No! Anything but that!

David Bull
Seseragi Studio
Nagabuchi 8-4-5 Ome City
Tokyo Japan 198-0052
<http://astoryaweek.com>