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UH-Manoa students try energy-efficient living

By [Loren Moreno](#)
Advertiser Staff Writer

Kody Kato and his roommates live in the most — and possibly the only — energy-efficient apartment at the University of Hawai'i-Manoa. But officials hope it will lead to others.

Over the summer, before Kato and his roommates moved into their apartment at Hale Wainani, it was being retrofitted with energy-efficient light bulbs and appliances by the UH Center for Smart Building and Community Design as a demonstration of how easy it is to conserve energy, said Mary Donohue, associate director of the UH Sea Grant College Program.



Architecture student Kody Kato lives in an energy-efficient Hale Wainani dorm apartment that he and others hope will be a proto-type for more such living units on the Manoa campus.

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"It's amazing to see the little things you can do that result in a lot lower electricity bill," said Kato, standing in the middle of his bedroom yesterday during an open house tour.

The "little things" — such as choosing appliances with Energy Star labels and compact fluorescent light bulbs — will result in big savings just for that one apartment.

In fact, Kato's apartment will save more than \$120 in electricity a year and if the same methods were applied to the entire UH-Manoa housing complex, it would result in a savings of more than \$120,000 a year for the university, according to Stephen Meder, director of the UH Center for Smart Building and Community Design. That would equal enough energy to power 85 O'ahu homes for a year, Donohue said.

For at least the next year, the UH Center for Smart Building and Community Design will monitor the energy consumption of the retrofitted apartment versus an apartment with standard appliances, Donohue said.

"This is an example to convince people that this is easy to do," Donohue said. "Our hope is the university will look to apply this elsewhere."

Janice Camara, interim housing director, said sustainable solutions like these are being considered for the Freer Hall redevelopment and for existing dorms.

Camara said energy-efficient products could be used during future renovations of the dorms. "It's possible when we change over refrigerators we can go for the more efficient models," she said.

IT'S SOMETHING YOU CAN DO, TOO

Energy-saving tips:

- Look for the Energy Star label when buying appliances such as refrigerators, toasters and televisions.
- Purchase computers and peripherals that automatically enter a "sleep" mode after a period of inactivity.
- Use compact fluorescent light bulbs instead of standard incandescent bulbs. They last 10 times longer and use about 75 percent less energy.
- Use a floor fan or ceiling fan instead of air conditioning.
- Turn down the water heater by a few degrees.
- Turn off computers, printers and rechargers when not in use.

Source: UH Center for Smart Building and Community Design

This is Kato's fourth year living in the dorms, and he said he notices a big difference in his new energy-efficient apartment.

"The quality of light is much better for studying," said Kato, who had trouble studying in previous dorm rooms, which used standard incandescent light bulbs.

The energy-efficient lamp on his desk uses compact fluorescent light bulbs instead. Not only do they last 10 times longer, they use about 75 percent less energy than a regular bulb.

From the coffee pot to the refrigerator, nearly every appliance in the apartment is considered energy efficient based on a measuring system set by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Department of Energy, Meder said.

Those products are labeled with the Energy Star and a sticker that predicts the product's annual energy cost.

"It's not just for the dorm room," said Chris Chang, one of Kato's roommates. "Anyone can do this."

Chang said he likely will be more aware of purchasing and using energy-efficient appliances and lighting when he is living in his own home or apartment in the future.

After a tour of the apartment, Denise Konan, interim UH-Manoa chancellor, said the university is committed to becoming more energy efficient and sustainable.

"Watching our energy bills increase year by year, we need to be more conscious," she said.

Konan said she would be watching the progress of the model apartment carefully and would like to see sustainability extend throughout the dorms.

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