



## Random commentary on storms and sustainability

Posted by [Yankee](#) on July 7, 2005 - 12:19pm

Three Two unrelated points from the internets for you today.

1. [Oil prices swing wildly today](#). It's already been observed in the comments [here](#) that oil prices [dropped 3%](#) this morning after the London attacks. According to the Bloomberg article, "Investors panicked on word of the attack and fled to quality, to gold, bonds and other safer harbors," said John Kilduff, vice president of risk management at Fimat USA in New York. However, prices are now back on the rise due to the threat of Hurricane Dennis.\*

2. The City Council of Sydney is [giving away \(sending through the mail, actually\)](#) cloth bags to all city residents. They are intended to be used instead of plastic supermarket bags. Here are some facts about plastic bag use in Australia:

Australians use around 10 billion plastic bags per year, nearly 7 billion of which are supermarket plastic bags. Over 230,000 of these plastic bags are dumped in landfills every hour! Although convenient, plastic bags are an environmental disaster and take between 20 and 1000 years to biodegrade, are a litter problem and can harm and kill wildlife.

I think this is just fantastic! They also provide some suggestions for retailers to help curb plastic bag usage, such as giving a small rebate to customers who bring in reusable bags and training staff to ask "Do you need a bag?" I really think this latter suggestion would be quite an improvement over the crazy looks I now get when I tell them I don't need a bag. (Hat tip: [Treehugger](#). And this part of the post is dedicated to [Phantom Scribbler](#).)

3. The [Christian Science Monitor](#) interviews "real people" about their oil usage. In the comments, [Gmack points out](#) one quote that he likes. I also think this one is pretty telling:

Americans, too, seem much less willing to sacrifice these days. The generation that lived through the Depression and World War II were more accustomed to scrimping when needed. They lived closer to work and owned smaller homes and fewer automobiles. Even as late as the 1970s, when oil was tight, Americans put on cardigan sweaters and turned down thermostats.

This idea of sacrifice keeps coming back into the picture. Americans today aren't willing to sacrifice, not like the Greatest Generation, they keep saying. I guess I tend to believe that, but it's because we (a) don't technically *have* to, as long as we make enough to afford higher energy costs, and (b) the government isn't telling us to, as they were during WWII. Without an external force shaping our behavior--or providing us with palatable alternatives--the status quo is awfully difficult to break out of.

By the way, I'm out of here for the weekend on a camping trip in the soggy Adirondacks. Keep up the good conversation.

\*Seriously, for those of you tracking the storm, I really do recommend that you go watch FX's [Oil Storm](#) if you can get your hands on it. I'm the only person I've ever heard advocate it, but seriously--it's not half bad! Yes, it unrealistically tacks on disaster after disaster, but the faux-documentary style which perfectly captures the equally painful style of "real" documentaries is fascinating to watch. And it might just give you some insight into what the government might do if our refining capacity is ever knocked out.

Technorati Tags: [peak oil](#), [oil](#)

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