

The Green Issue - together we can make a difference

In response to growing environmental awareness, we decided to put climate change at the top of our agenda.

We've taken a number of relevant topics and examined each one from the point of view of global warming and CO2 gas emissions. We're hoping you'll find the information interesting and useful and that the guide might inspire you to make a few changes - however big or small.

“A car driver switching to the train or bus to travel to work may cut their pollution by up to 18 times”.

In the UK, research revealed that staff racked up 26.5 billion miles flying on business in 2005 - that's the equivalent of travelling more than 600 times to Mars - and generated 5.4m tonnes of CO2 emissions. Around 62% of UK employees believe that employers should minimise climate change impacts of business travel. According to Motorvate, 10% reduction in fuel use could save a typical 200 car fleet as much as £30,000 per year. The most efficiently managed fleets use as much as 50% less fuel, per vehicle, than the worst.

A few things you can do

Allow some flexibility with start and finish times so that people can travel on public transport. If driving, ensure you have the correct tyre pressure. Driving for 65 miles with your tyres at the correct pressure could save 1kg of CO2. You'll reduce emissions if you keep your speed to 50mph but put your foot to the accelerator and you will rapidly increase your emissions. It can cost you up to 25% more in fuel to drive at 70mph compared with 50mph.

“Glass containers are an environmentally superior packaging - nontoxic, high value and completely recyclable. An estimated 80% of recovered glass containers are made into new glass bottles”.

Not only can you make a difference, you can convince others to follow. Every organisation is part of a supply chain; from the people you buy your photocopier paper from to the company that cleans your offices. When you adopt 'green' practices you are not only leading by example, you are making a statement about the nature of your business. The greatest benefits are derived by extending the focus as far as possible upstream towards the raw materials, downstream towards the consumer and then back again as the product and waste are recycled. Companies that buy in bulk can make a critical impact on suppliers. That's partly because they bring expertise and partly because the sheer scale of their orders can make it more cost-effective for suppliers to adapt their systems and products to meet higher environmental standards. Some of the knock on effect of improved standards can include energy conservation, better recycling and reduced packaging.

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A few things you can do

Save 1kg of CO₂ and ask your supplier to deliver two re-usable glass milk bottles instead of plastic cartons. Seek out products which can be recycled, sold or donated when you've finished with them and which don't come with too much packaging.

Easy when you know how

Before you buy, look at whether products have an environmental energy rating or water-rating label. Can you make it policy to buy products that have Energy Star features or a 'sleep' mode for when they are not being used? Ask for suppliers' environmental credentials and implement valuable 'green' criteria e.g. a climate change policy.

“An automatic dishwasher uses less hot water than doing dishes by hand - an average of six gallons less, or more than 2,000 gallons per year”.

Most of us take water for granted but it's an increasingly scarce resource and climate change is taking its toll with extreme natural events such as drought becoming more common. Even in the UK, where we assume water is plentiful, hose pipe bans have become an integral part of the summer. Extreme rainfall isn't the answer because effective water capture is difficult and flooding brings its own significant problems and challenges.

A few things you can do

Save one litre in one day by washing 20 office coffee mugs collectively in the sink instead of individually under a running tap. If you place a 'save-a-flush' in your cistern, you could save 10 litres of water - the same amount as a citizen the developing world uses in one day.

Easy when you know how

Fit all company taps with efficiency devices e.g. Tap Magic reduces water wastage by up to 70% but also enables you to have the normal full flow.

A few things you can do

You could save 1kg of CO₂ in one week if 12 people in your office bought affordable solar chargers and used them to charge their mobiles. These chargers can also be used for digital cameras and portable CD/MP3 players.

“A compact fluorescent light bulb uses 75% less energy than a normal bulb - and can last up to four years”.

In the UK, we waste the equivalent of around two power stations worth of electricity each year by leaving TV sets, gadgets and other modern home comforts on standby. Would you believe that 8% of all domestic electricity consumption is wasted by appliances being left on standby, costing British households approximately £247 million per year; energy and money that could easily be saved by pressing the ‘off’ button. Not only is this bad news for the environment; it’s not good for human productivity either. In Britain, we are all responsible for cranking up the heating in the cold weather but did you know that your concentration levels reduce by up to 50% in an office if the temperature rises above 24° C? Whilst in a manufacturing environment, a rise in temperature above 25° C is likely to leave workers more vulnerable to accidents through a lack of concentration.

A few things you can do

Next time you’re away from your desk for a considerable length of time, switch off your computer screen. If 20 people followed suit, you could save 1kg of CO2 in one hour. Using an energy saving light bulb over four days instead of a standard 100w bulb will also save the same amount.

Easy when you know how

Tell your friends. Sacrifice the water cooler and save 45kg CO2 per year and encourage colleagues to turn their computers off over night - you could save 1 tonne of CO2 in 10 weeks in an office of 200. See if your company will replace 180 CRT monitors with LCD equivalents and save 10 tonnes of energy and don’t forget to tell your boss that this will also save money!

“On average, each person in the U.K. produces half a tonne of rubbish each year”

A few things you can do

You can save 10 tonnes of waste by re-manufacturing 10 old office desks instead of throwing them out or donating 400 old PCs to the charity Computeraid for reuse in developing countries. Get people to think twice by making it more difficult to throw things away, i.e. install easily accessible central recycling facilities.

Easy when you know how

Check on the recyclability of the material being used and for the embodied energy content (the energy which has been used to make the product). Re-use materials from demolished buildings. Encourage suppliers and contractors to take back waste for re-use and recycling. If you’re redecorating, use wood instead of plastic for tables, chairs, doors, and window frames etc. Every tonne of moulded PVC replaced by wood saves one tonne of CO2. Wood flooring is durable and attractive and saves CO2 compared to carpet and vinyl. Laying 300m2 of wooden flooring instead of vinyl could save one tonne of CO2.

Did you know?

- There are millions of tonnes of office waste produced every year from photocopying to plastic coffee cups to unwanted PCs.
- The cost of managing and treating the waste can be up to 5-20 times for the cost of disposal.
- Buildings produce around 72.5 million tones of waste in the UK each year.
- According the Scottish Oil Care Campaign, waste oil for nearly 3 million car oil changes in Britain is not collected. If collected properly, this could meet the annual energy needs of 1.5 million people.

“If two car drivers shared a car they would reduce their overall pollution by 60%”.

People do care about the environment but quite often they just need a little encouragement and a bit more knowledge. By getting fellow colleagues to take part in a climate change programme, you will be helping them and your employer's/ company's reputation.

- 24% of drivers of a major accountancy firm have taken up Carbon Neutral driving, voluntarily paying themselves to combat CO2 emissions from business travel.
- From amongst the 20 countries across Europe, North America, Japan and Australia/New Zealand and Mexico that make up Fair Trade Labelling Organisation FLO (www.fairtrade.net), the UK has the largest fair trade market.
- Over 30 million people use parks and green spaces, making over 2 billion visits every year.
- MORI 2004 reports that 91% of the public believes that parks and public spaces improve people's quality of life.

A few things you can do

Gather a group of friends and colleagues together and brainstorm some low-level, easy-to- implement ideas. Get those up and running and use the experience to create a business case for roll out across the company.

Easy when you know how

Set up a Climate Change working party with representatives across the company. Use an external facilitator (if necessary) to brainstorm and then plan a climate change strategy and implementation programme. This is likely to be wide-ranging and will involve an initial investment but you are more likely to achieve funding if there is sponsorship from operational as well as marketing functions.

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Drink out of reusable cups; if an office of 11 people (using a cup a day each) stopped using plastic disposable cups they would save 1 tonne of CO2 in a year. Could you buy recycled goods only? Purchasing recycled products not only avoids some of the burden associated with using goods made from raw materials but it also helps expand the market for recycled products. Without a demand for goods, the materials we collect through recycling schemes build up and need to be stored, often at great cost.

“A half mm crack around a window frame can let in as much cold air as leaving the window open 7.5 cm”.

Manufacturing, transporting, using and disposing of materials produces CO2. Whether you are specifying a new building or reviewing what you can do in your existing building, you can save materials and CO2 by using fewer disposables, reusing good quality products and recycling. Consider replacing materials from non-renewable sources, like plastics, with renewable materials like wood and cardboard from sustainable sources.

A few things you can do

Something as simple as good insulation moderates internal temperature, prevents condensation and damp and can reduce capital costs - fewer radiators. If you want to go a step further, then hemp, reeds, straw, wool, cork, recycled paper, sugar cane and wood pulp fibre boards, are all fantastic forms of sustainable, renewable forms of building insulation.

Easy when you know how

Encourage architects, fit-out firms and your own Facilities Management team to propose ideas to improve the sustainability of your work environment (according to The Royal Institute for British Architects (RIBA) architecture is responsible for about 45% of the CO2 emissions in the UK). Specify energy efficient machinery and equipment from the Government ECA (Enhanced Capital Allowance) technology list. Enhanced capital allowances (www.eca.gov.uk) enable a business to claim 100% first year capital allowances on their spending on qualifying machinery.

Your building could have automatic control systems installed, such as Building Management Systems (BMS) and sensor lights (e.g. in toilets and stairwells) which ensure that the building is operating at maximum efficiency. If a new building is involved, your site can be orientated to make use of passive solar design (PSD) and Sunpipes, using heat gain and light to minimise energy as well as CO2. Combined Heat and Power (CHP) - currently the most efficient way of producing electricity from fossil fuels - which utilizes the power from burning natural gas in gas turbines to drive a generator that produces electricity. The exhaust gases from the gas turbine are so hot they can be used to generate steam, which in turn drives another generator to produce more electricity.

“89% of appliance consumers are aware of the Energy labels on star rated appliances and of these 81% are influenced by the Energy Rating labels when purchasing an appliance”.

Good communication is critical to climate change. Recently there has been a huge media focus on the main issues following strange weather patterns and ecological disasters. It is important that government and businesses alike take a positive stand and lead by example. Measuring and reducing environmental impact should be at the heart of any business and should filter through all processes, products and staff.