

REDUCING YOUR CARBON FOOTPRINT

A Guide for SMEs



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What is a carbon footprint?

Your carbon footprint is a measurement of what you produce and how it affects the environment measured in units of carbon dioxide. CO₂ is the root cause of climate change in the form of global warming.

This guide provides some practical tips on how you can reduce your carbon footprint, or in cases where you are unable to reduce all your emissions, how carbon offsetting can support a strategy of becoming carbon neutral. By following a few simple steps you will be helping to reduce the impact of climate change and the associated risks.

How to reduce carbon footprint

All businesses should aim to develop a plan to reduce their carbon emissions arising from their business activities. The complexity of the plan should be appropriate to the type and size of the business.

Carbon emission reduction plans should be reviewed periodically to assess progress against planned actions and to assess the feasibility of

further reductions, taking account of the availability of new technologies, enabling policies and incentives provided by government.

It is recommended that the business proprietor, a director or senior manager should be given the responsibility to develop and implement the plan for reducing emissions.

A few simple tips on practical ways of reducing carbon emissions

Travel

- Allow some flexibility with start and finish times for employees to allow them to 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.
- It can cost up to 25% more fuel to drive at 70mph compared to 50mph.
- Invest in video-conferencing facilities and reduce unnecessary distance flying for face to face meetings. Cutting one long haul flight will save 1 tonne of CO₂.
- Encourage employees to be carbon conscious. e.g. Recycle
- Create or commission a comprehensive Green Travel Plan i.e. a package of measures tailored to your company needs and aimed at promoting greener, cleaner, travel choices and reducing reliance on cars.

Use Environmentally Friendly Products

- Use only products which can be recycled, sold or donated when you've finished with them and which don't come with too much packaging.
- Before you buy, look at whether products have an environmental energy rating or water-rating label, <http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/consumerprod/energylabels/energylabel.pdf>
- Ask for suppliers' environmental credentials. Suggest to them the implementation of valuable 'green' criteria, e.g. a climate change policy.
- Specify products that have a low impact over their lifecycle, in terms of energy consumption, resource use, pollution and waste generation.

Conserve Water

- There are many ways that all businesses can conserve water – a number of solutions can be found at: <http://www.envirowise.gov.uk/page.aspx?o=water>, http://www.waterwise.org.uk/reducing_water_wastage_in_the_uk/house_and_garden/waterwise_marque.html

Select Renewable Energy

- 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.
- Change your office over to a green electricity tariff. More information can be found at: www.uswitch.com/Energy/Index.asp
- If you regularly use couriers, opt for a courier company that uses cycles for courier deliveries for shorter journeys and save 1 tonne of CO₂ per 1000 deliveries, or do a bit of research and find a company in your area with a 'green' initiative.

Save Energy

- If you're away from your desk for a considerable amount of time, switch off the 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 1kg of CO₂.

- Sacrifice the water cooler and save 45kg of CO₂ per year. Encourage colleagues to turn their computers off over night – you could save 1 tonne of CO₂ in 10 weeks in an office of 200.
- Something as simple as good insulation moderates internal temperature, prevents condensation and damp and can reduce capital costs – lower heating installation and fuel costs.
- 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.

Re-use, Recycle and Reduce Waste

- Contact your local council to discuss installing recycling facilities in your office.
- Alternatively, there are numerous companies who will take your recycling on a regular or one off basis, for a minimum fee.
- Encourage your staff to recycle their paper and purchase recycled paper wherever possible.
- Drink out of reusable or recycled cups.
- Extend the lifespan of your products through regular maintenance, repair and upgrading. It will not only save money in the long term but also reduce factory and end of life waste, as well as the raw material burden associated with new products.
- Check on the recyclability of the material being used and for the energy which has been used to make the product.
- Encourage suppliers and contractors to take back waste for re-use and recycling.
- Identify areas for waste reduction and implement a waste reduction strategy.

Selecting Materials

When refurbishing please consider:

- If you're refurbishing, use wood from sustainable sources instead of plastic for tables, chairs, doors and window frames etc.
- Wood flooring is durable and attractive and saves CO₂ compared to carpet and vinyl.

Carbon offsetting

Introduction

The purpose of a carbon offset is to neutralise the net CO₂ (carbon dioxide) emissions of unavoidable human activity, through the systematic reduction of the emissions or the re-absorption of CO₂ emissions generated.

The reduction of carbon emissions is designed to lower the impact of global warming and help with the fight against climate change.

AXA is partnering with the Carbon Neutral Company to provide you with carbon offsetting projects that will help your business become carbon neutral. The Carbon Neutral Company is one of the world's leading suppliers of carbon offset and climate consulting services. The Carbon Neutral Company uses a robust

methodology and auditing process that is verified and carried out by a number of leading experts including:

- Independent Advisory Committee
- KPMG annual audit
- Edinburgh Centre for Carbon Management.

What is a carbon offset?

A carbon offset is a credit for CO₂ emission reductions that can be purchased.

For every one tonne of CO₂ you produce, one tonne is saved somewhere else in the world.

Why offset?

Given the limited availability of zero carbon energy and materials, most businesses will be unable to reduce carbon emissions associated with their activities and/or products to zero in the short-term.

Offsetting allows businesses to recognise and do something positive about those emissions that remain. Undertaking offsetting actions on a voluntary basis can have a number of positive effects:

- a) It shows customers that the business recognises the full extent of its impacts and is prepared to take action to address them;
- b) Putting a price on the impact of climate change puts focus on actions to reduce emissions;
- c) Communication of the offset initiative can help to engage and educate staff and customers;
- d) By supporting projects that offset green house gas emissions businesses can provide local, social and environmental benefits and help to stimulate the take-up of low carbon technologies.

How do I offset carbon?

Step 1: Calculate the CO2 emissions from your business using the AXA carbon footprint calculator available on www.axa4business.co.uk

Step 2: Reduce emissions. Once you know how much CO2 you are responsible for and their source, you can prioritise how to reduce them. This guide will give you some useful tips.

Step 3: Purchase carbon offset credits. For those emissions you cannot reduce, you may wish to pay for reductions to be made somewhere else in the UK.

Carbon offsetting – how it works

Carbon offsetting involves calculating your emissions and then purchasing 'credits' from emission reduction projects. These projects have prevented or removed an equivalent amount of carbon dioxide elsewhere.

Offsetting is a useful example of what we can all do to address climate change for several reasons:

- Providing the means to work out the emissions from our own activities helps raise awareness of our impact on climate change. Combined with reducing our emissions, offsetting can be used to address this impact;
- When done in a robust and responsible way, offsetting leads to a reduction in carbon dioxide emissions in the local area to the offsetting project, often in developing countries;

- Offsetting projects, provide a mechanism for investment in clean technology in the areas which lack it the most. Such investment can lead to the spread of low-carbon development further reducing climate change impact.

Should you complete the AXA carbon footprint calculator you will be able to choose from all the projects available from the Carbon Neutral Company. Follow the link on the webpage for more in depth detail. If you need any further information about any of these projects please contact the Carbon Neutral Company directly.

www.axa4business.co.uk



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