

Ten Tips For Reducing Carbon Emissions

Everyone Can Make Positive Changes *by Beverly Templeton*



Last summer, I went to the Burns Court Cinema to see *An Inconvenient Truth*, Al Gore's movie on global warming. I expected to learn about climate change, but I did not expect to be deeply moved by this documentary. The message of the movie, however, affected me profoundly: global warming is real. It is already affecting the planet and urgent action by all of us is required to reverse the trend of rising carbon dioxide levels. Before viewing this movie, I did not think about global warming affecting my family. I didn't consider global warming as local warming. However, even small increases in global temperatures can result in myriad consequences. For example, the melting of land-based glacial ice in Greenland and Antarctica will cause sea levels to rise. Imagine what Florida

would be like if sea levels were to go up by 20 feet. This is not a far-fetched, sci-fi scenario for a time in the distant future, there is already evi-

dence that climate changes are beginning to happen. Just read the newspapers: glaciers are melting, hurricanes are becoming more intense as the ocean waters warm and coral reefs are under stress.

Global warming is an issue that affects all of us, regardless of age, gender, occupation or political stance. As a science teacher in Sarasota County, I've considered the scientific data and it paints a clear picture. As we burn ever-increasing amounts of fossil fuels to power our cars, industries and homes, carbon dioxide emissions are increasing and changing the chemistry of our atmosphere. This causes more heat to be trapped in the atmosphere and temperatures to rise. At one time, there was debate about the causes of global warming, but now the scientific community has reached a consensus. The debate is over. Global warming is real and people are the primary cause of it. And since we created this situation, we also have the power and the responsibility to change things. As a mother of three children, I find the consequences of global warming especially alarming. It is devastating to consider the kind of planet our children will inherit if we stay our current path."

Recently, an article in the *Sarasota Herald Tribune* discussed the possibility of listing polar bears as a threatened species due to habitat loss caused by melting ice. In the same week, radio news reported that an ice shelf had broken free in the Canadian Arctic. These news reports were not unexpected; based on current scientific research. We will be hearing about many more changes in the Arctic, Antarctic and around the world. And yet, I choose to remain optimistic. We stand at a crossroads. All the technology we need to solve the problem is already available, and we have a window of opportunity to act and make the changes necessary to bring our planet back into balance. What we need is the personal and political will to make changes. There are no magic silver bullets to fix the problem; instead, we will all have to work together and do our individual parts. Working as one, we can reduce CO₂ emissions to sustainable levels.

The solutions are not difficult but will require some changes to our lifestyles. Many are

easy to implement and are relatively inexpensive. For example, if every household changed one of their incandescent light bulbs to a compact fluorescent bulb, it would be the equivalent of removing one million cars from the road.

Here are 10 other things you can do to reduce carbon dioxide emissions (some of these ideas will sound familiar, and many will benefit your wallet as well as the environment):

1. Walk or carpool instead of driving your car and save one pound of carbon for every mile you don't drive. Burning one gallon of gas produces about 20 pounds of CO₂.

2. Recycle and buy recycled products whenever possible. Save 2,400 pounds of carbon dioxide each year by recycling half of your household waste.

3. Carry refillable water bottles and save 1.5 million barrels of oil, which equals the fueling of 100,000 cars for one year.

4. Use alternative energy sources. Wind and solar power produce virtually no emissions.

5. Avoid products with a lot of packaging and save 1,200 pounds of carbon dioxide by reducing your trash by 10 percent.

6. Turn off electronic devices when you're not using them and save thousands of pounds of carbon a year.

7. Plant a tree. A single tree will absorb one ton of carbon over its lifetime.

8. Move your thermostat down 2 degrees in winter and 2 degrees up in summer and save about 2,000 pounds of CO₂ emissions.

9. Buy energy-efficient appliances. An EnergyStar washer and refrigerator can reduce CO₂ emissions by 660 pounds per year.

10. Use cloth grocery bags instead of plastic or paper and save the approximately 12 million barrels of oil that are used to make the 100 billion grocery bags Americans use each year.

What will the Earth be like 40 years from now? It's up to us. I hope our children and grandchildren will talk about how their families, communities and countries around the world joined to solve a global problem. We have started to make some changes at our house. Are you ready?

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