



Article from : Commercial Motor

Date : October 2, 2008

## **How green are you?**

A failure to plan is planning to fail, so they say. We talk you through measuring your environmental impact and devising a policy to rectify it.

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If you can't measure it, you can't manage it. The first thing any organisation that is serious about reducing its carbon footprint should do is measure that footprint.

This will show you where the easiest gains can be made, and will also help you to produce a prioritised list of actions you can take to reduce your carbon output. It is also a chance to look at your bills, your processes and the efficiency of your operation. Put simply, wherever you're wasting anything but time, you're wasting natural resources.

Once you've measured your environmental impact, you need to identify your goals. This is an important step. For many, having an environmental policy will be about saying the right things and having a document to appease customers' corporate social responsibility (CSR) concerns - and that's important. But the fundamental benefit of a policy is that it makes you identify your overall view of the subject, your objectives and your approach. The more clearly you can articulate this to your workforce, the more coherently you will set about implementing it.

### **Auditing your operation**

There are different approaches to be had by auditing your operation. The Government's major focus is on reducing carbon emissions. Thus, carbon footprinting is one of the more readily available tools. A true environmental audit, though, will examine all your processes and consumption with a view to minimising impact on neighbours, protecting the air quality in the immediate locality and natural resources and minimising waste, noise and odour production.

### **Carbon footprinting**

One of the challenges for the carbon economy has been to agree a standard protocol for calculating carbon output.

For smaller firms that are unlikely to seek external certification of their green efforts, a standard web-based calculator may be suitable (see over).

However, larger companies should be aware of the GHG protocol ([www.ghgprotocol.org/](http://www.ghgprotocol.org/)) - this is the emerging international standard. Another emerging standard closely allied with the GHG protocol is ISO14064. Any environmental auditing tools or companies you use should adhere to these standards. That said, you can set your own methodology, but it may limit the external credibility of your work.

In addition, the accepted greenhouse gas conversion values (ie how much a unit of power emits) in the UK are set by Defra and are available on the Defra and the Carbon Trust websites. The Government focuses on CO<sub>2</sub> and CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent (expressed as CO<sub>2</sub>e) values. However, there are other pollutants and greenhouse gases that daily life and commerce emit into the atmosphere. It is your choice whether you wish to narrow your focus to CO<sub>2</sub> or use a wider measure.

Once you have established which methodology to work to, you can perform a basic calculation fairly quickly by looking at on-site energy usage, including gas, electricity, heating oil and vehicle fuel.

However, this isn't the total footprint of an organisation. Indirect emissions, including from product and vehicle suppliers, subcontractors and employees travelling to work, all have an impact. Decide whether to include leased or short-term hire vehicles or subsidiaries. For most companies, calculating the cost of these emissions and reducing them is a secondary project.

Keep in mind that your calculations must include all your vehicles, depots, warehouses, workshops, cold stores and offices. It must also include any cars driven on company business, flights and train journeys. And remember, the function of an environmental audit is to lay a clear, consistent and verifiable baseline to guide and to measure improvements against.

### Writing a policy

A policy is designed to express your approach to a subject clearly and concisely. Begin by stating the facts - that transport, while improving daily, contributes significantly to greenhouse gas emissions, which are implicated in global warming.

Next, you should outline your belief. For example, that your company wishes to perform in a manner that supports the local community and global environment. The remainder of the document can be as simple as a statement to:

- 1 Reduce your operational impact in the environment
- 1 Reduce your usage of natural and manufactured resources
- 1 Recycle all possible elements of waste product and safely dispose of the rest
- 1 Monitor and improve your environmental performance

The level of detail you give as to how you will address these issues is up to you, but this is the perfect chance to underline to yourself, staff and customers that environmental responsibility is not bolted on to your operation, but is a fundamental principle of how you do business. It may be good to illustrate your policy with key achievements.

Are you committing to reducing your carbon, to a broad-brush good-neighbour approach, or to pushing the limits and achieving carbon negativity?

Make a realistic decision - you must live up to it. Ensure the policy is readily accessible to everyone, part of all staff inductions and that a nominated person has responsibility for ensuring compliance with it.

The Road Haulage Association ([www.rha.net](http://www.rha.net)) offers members an environmental policy that can be amended and rebranded to suit the organisation. Most organisations have their environmental policies on their websites - read a few and see what impresses.

### Offsetting

It is tempting to overlay carbon offsetting in an environmental policy, because planting a forest somewhere has the same whimsical and appealing ring as sponsoring an orphanage - it is hard to see how it can be anything but good PR. But tread carefully, because offsetting can bite you in more ways than one. The first problem is that it isn't environmentally sustainable to waste resources and then compensate for that waste. You must have ensured that the use of resources and the production of greenhouse gases are driven as low as possible before offsetting the remaining amount.

It is impossible, however, particularly for a transport company, not to emit CO<sub>2</sub> and so carbon neutrality can be achieved only through some off-setting. However, as always, you must be careful. Use schemes whose offsets are properly calculated and sustainable - Defra's first approved off-setters are due to be announced ([www.defra.gov.uk/environment/climatechange/uk/carbonoffset/links.htm](http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/climatechange/uk/carbonoffset/links.htm)).

In the meantime, its code of practice advice for choosing an off-setter can be found at [www.defra.gov.uk/environment/climatechange/uk/carbonoffset/codeofpractice.htm](http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/climatechange/uk/carbonoffset/codeofpractice.htm). While the Government thinks about it, 50 international non-governmental bodies, including World Wildlife Foundation, have chosen the Gold Standard as the peak offset rating ([www.cdmgoldstandard.org/uploads/file/GS\\_brochure\\_07\\_web2.pdf](http://www.cdmgoldstandard.org/uploads/file/GS_brochure_07_web2.pdf)).

Choose an offset that coincides with your firm's values. For example, it may feel more natural for a transport company to fund renewable fuel than to renew a forest.

### The Carbon Trust

The Carbon Trust offers free carbon surveys to organisations whose energy bill is more than £50,000 a year. An inspector will visit your premises, assess the building and offer free or low-cost ways of cutting your footprint, and your energy bill in the process.

Carbon Trust does have some information on its site for self auditing. The Carbon Footprint Calculator ([www.carbontrust.co.uk/publicsites/CFCalculator/CO2Calculator.aspx](http://www.carbontrust.co.uk/publicsites/CFCalculator/CO2Calculator.aspx)) allows you to enter the number of sites, employees and figures for gas, electricity and vehicle mileage and calculates your carbon footprint based on emissions data from Defra.

One aspect is that you can save your footprint and others at regular intervals to assess the impact of any changes on your carbon output. It has two publications, Assessing the energy use on an industrial site and Assessing the energy use in a building, which give useful information on how to perform a walk-round assessment

([www.carbontrust.co.uk/energy/assessyourorganisation](http://www.carbontrust.co.uk/energy/assessyourorganisation)). There is also an action plan.

### Paragon Software Systems

Paragon Software Systems has added a carbon minimiser option to its routing, scheduling and transport optimisation software, to improve environmental efficiency. The minimiser helps to reduce the carbon and fuel content of planned schedules ([www.paragonsoftwaresystems.com](http://www.paragonsoftwaresystems.com)).

### Freight Transport Association

The FTA has developed its CarbonFTA to help members understand how to record, report and reduce carbon dioxide emissions. The CarbonFTA Manual is available as either a book or on the internet. It contains information and advice and is applicable to van and light commercial vehicle operators as well as HGV operators.

However, FTA's auditing service is a separate paid-for facility. Although managing consultant Karen Packham says it is a bespoke service, we get the impression it focuses more on improving fleet performance than carbon footprinting ([www.carbon.fta.co.uk](http://www.carbon.fta.co.uk)).

### National Energy Foundation

The National Energy Foundation is one of the most useful websites to visit. It offers a quick carbon calculator that will probably be more than sufficient for the needs of small companies ([www.nef.org.uk/greencompany/co2calculator.htm](http://www.nef.org.uk/greencompany/co2calculator.htm)) and a useful selection of advice and links on where to find more information for your purpose and size of enterprise.

### CM/Transfrigoroute downloadable audit

Transfrigoroute has developed a thorough environmental audit, which questions every aspect of your operation, including noise pollution, the effect on neighbours, battery and oil disposal, tyre policy, eliminating offensive smells and water-protection systems.

Waste management, energy conservation and maintenance procedures each receive a question sheet of their own, as do fuel economy, the visual impact of your site and the environmental awareness of your staff. The 12-page document is available to download from CM's own website ([www.roadtransport.com/greenaudit](http://www.roadtransport.com/greenaudit)) comprehensive, and any operator using it will have a clear idea of the environmental performance of their company, and steps to take to reduce its green impact. It doesn't calculate your carbon footprint, but it can be used as part of an overall action plan to reduce your carbon output.

The CM/Transfrigoroute audit should be used every six months as a way of tracking improvements ([www.roadtransport.com/greenaudit](http://www.roadtransport.com/greenaudit)).

### Staff audits

Encouraging staff to audit their own lives and implement some of the ideas is a wonderful way to achieve 'buy-in'. Publish your own carbon footprint on the notice board/intranet and tell staff how you will reduce it. To calculate a personal/household footprint, just log on to [www.carboncalculator.co.uk](http://www.carboncalculator.co.uk)

### External certification

ISO14001 is the International Standards Organisation's standard for environmental management. It is demanding, but well worth achieving. Companies must demonstrate continual environmental improvement, and compliance with all relevant regulations, but there are no absolute performance levels you must hit.

### The Carbon Trust Standard

The Carbon Trust Standard is awarded to companies that can demonstrate they have reduced their carbon footprint in either absolute or relative terms year-on-year. The award is held for two years and must then be re-applied for. The scheme is open to all companies regardless of size ([www.carbontruststandard.com](http://www.carbontruststandard.com)).

### Product/service lifecycle calculations

This month, Defra is to publish its standard for calculating the footprint of a product or service. Clearly it will be harder to calculate a standard figure for transport or construction services than for specific products, but not impossible. This may be useful to transport firms as more customers want to know the environmental impact of their transport contract.

It can also be of value to any public-facing companies - such as the home-delivery or removals sector - because it is not difficult to show the environmental benefits of one truckload against several cars or vans.

There are lots of organisations that can help you audit your operation, although some tools are available only to members or specific groups.

### AUDITING TOOLS