

gogreen



Green Glossary

Agenda 21

A comprehensive plan of action to be taken globally, nationally, and locally by organizations of the United Nations System, Governments, and Major Groups in every area in which humans have an impact on the environment.

Air Pollution

Contaminants or substances in the air that interfere with human health or produce other harmful environmental effects.

Alternative Energy

Usually environmentally friendly, this is energy from uncommon sources such as wind power or solar energy, not fossil fuels.

Alliance to Save Energy

A non-profit coalition of business, government, environmental and consumer leaders. The Alliance to Save Energy supports energy efficiency as a cost-effective energy resource under existing market conditions and advocates energy-efficiency policies that minimize costs to society and individual consumers, and that lessen greenhouse gas emissions and their impact on the global climate.

Alternative Fuels

Similar to alternative energy. Not fossil fuels, but different transportation fuels like natural gas, methanol, bio fuels and electricity.

Annual Consumption

Annual consumption refers to the amount of electricity used by a consumer in one year and is typically measured in kilowatt-hours (kWh). This information is available on your electricity bill or by contacting your energy provider.

Biodegradable

Substances which, when left alone, break down and are absorbed into the eco-system.

Black Water

The wastewater generated by toilets.

Biodiesel

A type of fuel made by combining animal fat or vegetable oil with alcohol; biodiesel can be directly substituted for diesel), or be used as an additive.

Bioenergy

Energy generated from renewable, biological sources such as plants, to be used for heat, electricity, or vehicle fuel.

Biomass

Living or recently-dead organic material that can be used as an energy source or in industrial production; excludes organic material that has been transformed by geological processes.

Brownfield

Land previously utilized by commercial or industrial facilities that remains abandoned with known or perceived environmental contamination.

Carbon Dioxide

Carbon dioxide (CO₂) is an atmospheric gas that is a major component of the carbon cycle. Although produced through natural processes, carbon dioxide is also released through human activities, such as the combustion of fossil fuels to produce electricity. Carbon dioxide is the predominate gas contributing to the greenhouse effect, and as such is known to contribute to climate change.

Carbon Footprint

A measure of your impact on the environment in terms of the amount of greenhouse gases produced, measured in units of carbon dioxide.

Carbon Trading

A trading system for countries, companies and individuals designed to offset carbon emissions from one activity with another, whereby those who cannot meet their emissions goals may purchase credits from those who surpass their goals.

Clinton Climate Initiative

Focuses on worldwide issues that demand urgent action, solutions, and measurable results global climate change, HIV/AIDS in the developing world, childhood obesity and economic opportunity in the United States, and economic development in Africa and Latin America.

Corporate Social Responsibility

The continuing commitment by businesses to behave ethically and contribute to economic development while improving the quality of life of the workplace as well as the local community and society at large; a company's obligation to be accountable to all of its stakeholders in all its operations and activities with the aim of achieving sustainable development not only in the economic dimension but also in the social and environmental dimensions.

Climate Change

A change in temperature and weather patterns due to human activity like burning fossil fuels.

Compact Fluorescent Lamp

A compact fluorescent lamp (CFL), also known as a compact fluorescent light bulb is a type of fluorescent lamp designed to replace an incandescent lamp. Compared to incandescent lamps of the same luminous flux, CFLs use less energy and have a longer rated life. A CFL can save over \$30 in electricity costs over the lamp's lifetime compared to an incandescent lamp and save 2000 times their own weight in greenhouse gases.

Conservation

Preserving and renewing, when possible, human and natural resources.

Daylighting

The use of natural light to supplement or replace artificial lighting.

Dow Jones Sustainability Indexes (DJSI)

The first global indexes to track the financial performance of sustainability driven companies

Ecological Footprint

The area of land and water needed to produce the resources to entirely sustain a human population and absorb its waste products with prevailing technology. The concept of an ecological footprint is used as a resource management and community-planning tool.

Emissions Cap

A limit placed on companies regarding the amount of greenhouse gases it can emit.

Emission

Anthropogenic releases of gases to the atmosphere. In the context of global climate change, they consist of radioactively important greenhouse gases.

Energy audit

A program carried out by a utility company in which an auditor inspects a home and suggests ways energy can be saved.

Energy Efficiency

Refers to products or systems using less energy to do the same or better job than conventional products or systems. Energy efficiency saves energy, saves money on utility bills, and helps protect the environment by reducing the demand for electricity.

Fair Trade

An international trading partnership that seeks to help marginalized producers and workers achieve financial self-sufficiency by establishing direct lines of trade between producers and consumers, guaranteeing producers fair prices for goods, restricting exploitative labor processes, and favoring environmentally-sustainable production processes through a system of labeling products as “fair trade”

Footprint

Land area taken up by a building.

Fossil Fuels

Fossil fuels are the nation’s principal source of electricity.

The popularity of these fuels is largely due to their low costs. Fossil fuels come in three major forms - coal, oil, and natural gas. Because fossil fuels are a finite resource and cannot be replenished once they are extracted and burned, they are not considered renewable.

Fuel Cell

A technology that uses an electrochemical process to convert energy into electrical power. Often powered by natural gas, fuel cell power is cleaner than grid-connected power sources. In addition, hot water is produced as a by-product.

Global Climate Change

Climate change refers to any significant change in measures of climate (such as temperature, precipitation, or wind) lasting for an extended period (decades or longer). Climate change may result from:

- Natural factors, such as changes in the sun's intensity or slow changes in the Earth's orbit around the sun
- Natural processes within the climate system (e.g. changes in ocean circulation)
- Human activities that change the atmosphere's composition (e.g. through burning fossil fuels) and the land surface (e.g. deforestation, reforestation, urbanization, desertification, etc.)

Green

A term that is widely used to describe a building and site that is designed in an environmentally sensitive manner, i.e. with minimal impact to the environment.

Green Design

A design, usually architectural, which conforms to environmentally sound principles of building, material and energy use. A green building, for example, might make use of solar panels, skylights, and recycled building materials.

Greenwashing

The process by which a company publicly and misleadingly declares itself to be environmentally-friendly but internally participates in environmentally unfriendly practices.

Global Warming

The average increase in the temperature of the atmosphere near the Earth's surface and in the troposphere, which can contribute to changes in global climate patterns. Global warming can occur from a variety of causes, both natural and human induced. In common usage, global warming often refers to the warming that can occur as a result of increased emissions of greenhouse gases from human activities.

Green Wedding

Holding your wedding with the least environmental impact possible.

Greenhouse Effect

The process that raises the temperature of air in the lower atmosphere due to heat trapped by greenhouse gases, such as carbon dioxide, chlorofluorocarbons, and ozone.

Greenhouse Gases (GHG)

Gases in the Earth's atmosphere that produce the greenhouse effect. Changes in the concentration of certain greenhouse gases, due to human activity such as fossil fuel burning, increase the risk of global

climate change. Greenhouse gases include water vapor, carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide, halogenated fluorocarbons, ozone, perfluorinated carbons, and hydrofluorocarbons.

Green Power

Renewable energy resources such as solar, wind, geothermal, biogas, biomass and low impact hydro generate green power.

ISO 14000 Standards

The ISO 14000 Standards are a set of environmental standards designed by the International Organization for Standardization to ensure that businesses are environmentally responsible.

Kyoto Protocol

In December 1997, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change was held in Kyoto, Japan and was attended by delegates from 160 countries. A legally binding agreement, the Kyoto Protocol, was adopted by the countries in attendance, under which the industrialized nations agreed to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions by an average of 5.2 percent below 1990 emissions levels by 2010.

Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED)

The Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Green Building Rating System™ is the nationally accepted benchmark for the design, construction, and operation of high performance green buildings. LEED gives building owners and operators the tools they need to have an immediate and measurable impact on their buildings' performance. LEED promotes a whole-building approach to sustainability by recognizing performance in five key areas of human and environmental health: sustainable site development, water savings, energy efficiency, materials selection, and indoor environmental quality.

Landfill

Land waste disposal site in which waste is generally spread in thin layers, compacted, and covered with a fresh layer of soil each day.

Mobius Loop

The Mobius Loop recycle symbol has no specific meaning but is generally understood to signify the interlocking steps of recycling: reuse, reduce, recycle.

Ozone Layer

In the upper atmosphere about 15 miles above sea level, it forms a protective layer which shields the earth from excessive ultraviolet radiation and occurs naturally.

Photovoltaic Panels

Solar panels that convert sunlight into electricity. Power is produced when sunlight strikes the semiconductor material and creates an electrical current.

Recycling

The process of collecting, sorting, and reprocessing old material into usable raw materials.

Recyclable Products

Materials that can be collected, separated or removed from the solid waste stream for use in the manufacturing of another product.

Reforestation

Replanting of forests on lands that have recently been harvested.

Renewable Energy Resources

Energy sources that can keep producing energy indefinitely without being used up. To be considered renewable energy, a resource must rely on naturally existing energy flows such as sunshine, wind and water flowing. The energy source, or “fuel”, must be replaced by natural processes at a rate that is equal to, or faster than, the rate at which the energy source is consumed.

Solar Energy

Energy from the sun.

Solar Panels

A system that actively concentrates thermal energy from the sun by means of solar collector panels. The panels typically consist of flat, sun-oriented boxes with transparent covers, containing water tubes or air baffles under a blackened heat absorbent panel. The energy is usually used for space heating, for water heating, and for heating swimming pools.

Sustainability

Meeting the needs of the present without depleting resources or harming natural cycles for future generations.

Sustainable Development

Development that utilizes tools, supplies and strategies that protect and enhance the earth’s natural resources and diverse ecosystems so as to meet the social and economic needs of the present without compromising the ability to meet the needs of the future.

Wind Power

Energy generated from large propellers that when spun by the wind, drive turbines that power generators and create electricity.

Wind Turbine

A machine that captures the energy of the wind and transfers the motion to an electric generator shaft for the creation of electricity.

Zero Waste

A production system aiming to eliminate the volume and toxicity of waste and materials by conserving or recovering all resources.