



THE TRUTH ABOUT CO₂

CO2 emissions are a hot topic these days but do we really understand what the problem is? Luke Bell looks into the part we each play.

CO2 emissions are continuously making headlines in today's media. Yet, with all the hype, it's difficult to get a grasp of what it's all about. What is the link between all this CO2 and me? If I can answer that question, then maybe I can begin to understand how I can help.

The four biggest causes of CO2 emissions in the UK are Power Plants (27.5%), Industry (24%), Transportation (24%) and Residential (17%).

*approximations are taken from UK Energy Predictions (UEP)

Power plants burn fossil fuels to produce electricity to power Britain. Emissions from the industrial sector are due to processes like cement, lime, iron and steel production. Transportation is the third major cause of CO2 and residential homes are the fourth, through electricity usage and the direct combustion of fossil fuels for heating.

So, the biggest cause of CO2 emissions in the UK is the generation of electricity in power plants. If I can cut down my use of electricity, both directly and indirectly, then this will help reduce power plant emissions. How do I do this? Well, the UK's national grid powers 3 main areas; industry, the domestic sector and the services & agricultural industries.

Firstly, I can help reduce the amount of electricity needed in the Industrial sector. I can stop contributing to consumer demand and try to live more within my means. I can sit down with my calculator and work out how much I spend on consumables or goods each month and then decide what I can cut out. Not only will I save money, I'll be saving the planet too!

Secondly, I can cut down on the amount of electricity I use in the home. I can unplug electrical appliances when I'm not using them, I can buy energy efficient light bulbs etc.

Thirdly, I can help reduce electricity usage in the services and agricultural industries. When leaving my workplace, I can make sure I unplug my computer and printer and turn off lights when I leave a room. I can grow more of my own produce and buy organic to reduce the amount of industrial machinery needed in agriculture.

The other major contributors to CO2 are industry, transportation and the residential sector. I've already started on reducing the impact from the residential sector - I could probably be a bit more economical with my gas central heating as well as electricity. Throwing on a couple of extra layers



instead of cranking on the heat, putting an extra blanket on the bed etc. There's not so much I can do about the industrial sector as far as cement, lime, iron and steel production are concerned. But I can certainly help reduce the carbon footprint of transportation... that's just a matter of getting on my bike! I can start cycling and walking instead of driving, wherever possible. This way, I'll reduce CO2 emissions from transportation and get some much needed exercise at the same time.

By understanding the direct and indirect links between our own everyday lives and CO2 emissions, we can all start to grasp how and where we can help. It is reported that if everyone in the UK installed just one energy saving light bulb, we'd save enough CO2 to fill the Albert Hall over 1,900 times!!

We don't need to have a complete lifestyle overhaul, we don't need to turn ourselves into the 'Good Life' and become completely self-sufficient (though that is sounding more appealing by the day!) Small and simple steps can make a huge difference. It's easy when you know how...

"There is a sufficiency in the world for man's need but not for man's greed."

Mahatma Gandhi