



# Reducing Professional Air Travel Emissions

*The University of Washington as a Case Study*



## Impacts of Air Travel

The average American is responsible for the equivalent of about ~23 metric tons of carbon dioxide emissions annually. One round trip flight from the United States to Europe emits 3-4 tons of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. The global average emissions are roughly 4 tons per person!

Air travel has other impacts beyond greenhouse gas emissions. Nitrous oxides convert to ozone at high altitude and planes emit contrails that trap heat that would otherwise escape from the earth.

Air travel is responsible for roughly 9% of the total human impact on the climate.

## Travel Smart

Participation in conferences and face-to-face meetings are important for many reasons. While it may be too much to ask employees to stop traveling to important events, it is important to consider the impact of their travel on the climate. If you absolutely must travel, you should know:

- Traveling by train or bus emits 3 – 7 times less carbon dioxide than flying.
- Taking off and landing require the most fuel, so fly the most direct route.
- If you must rent a car to reach your destination, rent a hybrid.

## Select Resources

UW Climate Partnership Air Travel Education Initiative. Available: <http://courses.washington.edu/emksp06/uwclimate/index.html>

UW Climate Partnership GHG Offsets Analysis. Available: <http://courses.washington.edu/emksp06/uwclimate/index.html>

University of Washington Learning Spaces staff and website: Available: [http://catalyst.washington.edu/learning\\_spaces/index.html](http://catalyst.washington.edu/learning_spaces/index.html)

Evaluations and Recommendations of Voluntary Offset Companies Anja Kollmuss, Benjamin Bowell, Tufts Climate Initiative, January 2007. Available: <http://www.tufts.edu/tie/tci>

A Consumer's Guide to Retail Carbon Offset Providers. Clean Air- Cool Planet, 2006. Available: <http://www.cleanair-coolplanet.org/>

## Try Virtual Conferencing Technologies

**Online collaboration:** Collaboration with colleagues from other universities already takes place via phone and email. Additional University of Washington web tools include document posting, peer review, file and portfolio sharing, quick polls and websites.

**Digital Presentation Studio:** Students and faculty can pre-record lectures and post them on the web to avoid travel for presentations.

**Videoconference Studio for Multi-party Meetings:** Collaboration and idea-sharing between a small group of colleagues, administrators, or stakeholders can take place at the University's Videoconference Studio, which simulates face-to-face interaction, presentation, and document sharing. The stadium-style studio can accommodate 16 people and can connect to locations worldwide.

## Consider Offsetting

Sometimes, air travel is necessary, so in addition to traveling smart, individuals should consider "offsetting" their emissions. Greenhouse gas (GHG) offsets are environmental commodities that represent the act of reducing or avoiding GHG emissions in one place in order to "offset" the emissions taking place elsewhere. Offsets can be created when a party pays someone else to reduce their GHG emissions or sequester carbon dioxide and receives credit for those actions. For example, projects can involve funding renewable energy creation or supporting energy conservation initiatives.

- Encourage your department to include offsetting in its budget
- Encourage colleagues and visitors to offset flights for travel
- Track your yearly air travel and offset at the end of the year

## Which Provider?

There are now more than 30 organizations that are engaging with individuals and businesses selling a diverse set of commodities loosely referred to as GHG Offsets. We recommend you do your own research as to which provider to choose. Below are three U.S. based reputable providers: a place to start your investigations.

**Native Energy:** For-profit Vermont company that implements primarily wind, solar, methane, biomass and agriculture-based projects.

**Climate Trust:** Non-profit Oregon organization that implements primarily wind, cogeneration, reforestation and efficiency based projects.

**Bonneville Environmental Foundation:** Non-profit Oregon organization that implements primarily wind, solar, and methane based projects.

*A thorough analysis of the validity and issues surrounding GHG offsets is available at the UW Climate Partnership website.*

In Partnership with the City of Seattle  
2006-2007 Luce Keystone Project: UW Climate Partnership Team  
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