

Carbon Jargon Buster

Carbon dioxide (CO₂)



A gas that naturally makes up about 0.04% of our atmosphere and something that all living things emit when they breathe. CO₂ is only a problem when there's too much of it, as it traps more heat and makes the world hotter than it needs to be (the 'greenhouse effect').

Greenhouse gases (GHGs)



Carbon dioxide and other gases that have a 'greenhouse effect' (e.g. methane, nitrous oxide, ozone) – these are measured collectively as the 'carbon dioxide equivalent' (CO₂e).

Climate change



Changes caused by the planet's average temperature increasing due to trapped heat, such as rising sea levels, melting glaciers, heavier storms, and more frequent droughts.

Carbon emissions



The CO₂ and other GHGs we release into the atmosphere when we burn fossil fuels like coal, natural gas and oil, or organic matter like trees – this releases the GHGs locked inside them.

Carbon footprint



The amount of carbon emissions associated with a person, activity, organisation or country.

Carbon offsetting



Balancing GHG emissions from activities with the removal of an equivalent amount of GHGs from the atmosphere (e.g. growing trees that take CO₂ from the atmosphere).

Carbon neutral



An activity or organisation that has no net emissions of CO₂ by reducing or offsetting or a combination of both.

Net zero



The condition in which emissions of GHGs to the atmosphere are balanced by removals of GHGs from it – this is different to 'carbon neutral' as it covers all GHGs and is on a global scale.

Renewable energy



Energy that comes from natural sources and processes that are constantly replenished e.g. solar, wind, hydro, tidal, geothermal and biomass energy.

Scope 1 emissions



Scope 1 emissions – Direct emissions from owned or controlled sources (fuels such as natural gas, diesel, LPG, gas oil).

Scope 2 emissions



Scope 2 emissions – Emissions from purchased electricity, heat, and steam.

Scope 3 emissions



Scope 3 emissions – Indirect 'upstream' and 'downstream' emissions that are a consequence of the company's activities, but occur from sources not owned or controlled by them.