

## Air Pollution and Air Quality

Our “carbon footprint” is a fancy name for measuring how much carbon dioxide you produce. Whether or not you believe carbon dioxide is the cause of global warming, it is harmful to the environment and when you reduce your carbon footprint you not only help the environment, reduce air pollution and save money. Scientists have shown that air pollution from cars, factories and power plants is a major cause of asthma attacks. And more than 159 million Americans -- over half the nation's population -- live in areas with bad air. A research study published in 2002 estimated that 30 percent of childhood asthma is due to environmental exposures, costing the nation \$2 billion per year. Studies also suggest that air pollution may contribute to the development of asthma in previously healthy people. Ground level ozone, sulfur dioxide, particulate matter and nitrogen oxides are produced by car emissions and coal generated power plants. Energy conservation – merely replacing lights with CFL or LED can reduce power consumption and reduce need for additional coal generated power plants. Simple steps such as when you purchase a new car look at the gas mileage; consider a hybrid, alternative fuels or more efficient vehicles. Ride the metro, bus, bicycle or walk for short trips. Combine automobile trips and do not ride alone: car pool to meetings at the League Office, to church etc can help to reduce your energy consumption and help to save money and improve the air we breathe.

When you drive - drive wisely:

- 1. Idling:** You'll save gas and reduce emissions by turning the engine off and restarting it when you would otherwise idle for two minutes or more.
- 2. Stop-and-go driving:** Avoid travel during congested, peak rush-hour traffic. Try to smooth your driving by accelerating and decelerating gradually, anticipating stops and starts for traffic lights, changing traffic speeds and so on.
- 3. Park your car in shaded areas** whenever possible, besides keeping your car's interior more comfortable, you will lessen pollution and wasted fuel that results from gasoline evaporating from the engine and gas tank.
- 4. High engine loads:** Besides using your car's air conditioner, quick acceleration, high speeds, climbing grades, revving the engine and carrying or pulling extra weight all make the engine work harder. Leave earlier when making a trip to avoid the need to speed.
- 5. Reduce drag:** To save gas and cut emissions, don't carry unneeded items in your vehicle, and reduce drag by carrying cargo inside rather than on your roof racks
- 6. Maintain Your Car and all gas engines (including lawn mower, boats etc)**

Indoor air pollution can also contribute to health problems. We will have more information in future articles as we approach our Unit Presentation in March.