

7 ways to reduce your operation's carbon footprint

We live in a world marked by continuous change. One constant we have seen over the last few years, however, is a focus on sustainability.

Many consumers are making changes to their daily routines and purchasing decisions. But of course, the biggest shift will only happen when companies across all industries make the same transition. And as customers and employees demand more sustainable ways of doing business, more and more organizations are looking at ways to reduce their carbon footprint.

But where do you start, as an organization?

Half the battle is defining the changes that will make the most impact for your business. And that means carrying out a company-wide assessment before you can take the first tangible steps. Which is why we've compiled 7 tips for you below, so you can get a better picture of how transforming your processes, choosing new providers and/or implementing new policies could make the difference for your operations' ecological footprint.

Optimize your utilities

We all know the example: replacing an old fridge is often the most sustainable choice in the long run, despite the footprint of producing a new one. When calculating your ecological footprint, you have to weigh up the resources needed to produce a new machine against the excess energy consumption of the old one. This is even more valid for production sites where fixed machines are the biggest consumers of energy. So if you want to optimize your machine efficiency, start with an assessment of your biggest energy consumers, since that's where the biggest gains are to be found.

Overall, we see that energy costs make up 30% of a facility's operating budget. Apart from assessing the machines that consume the most energy, there are some other small steps that can make a big difference. It might be a good idea to look into reducing the temperature in your refrigeration room, for example.



In fact, for production facilities in the food and beverage industry, industrial refrigeration systems can often account for up to 60% of your total energy spend. What about your own operations? How big a chunk of your opex goes towards paying the energy bill?

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Remember the four Rs: Refuse, Reduce, Re-use, Recycle

Think before you buy is probably the best way to limit your impact as an individual. The same applies, however, to an industrial context. If you are unlikely to use a machine frequently due to fluctuating demand, does it really make sense to buy it? Maybe renting is a better solution. Not just for your carbon footprint but also your bottom line.

If you absolutely need to perform a certain operation in-house, analyze each step and identify bottlenecks where you can reduce waste.

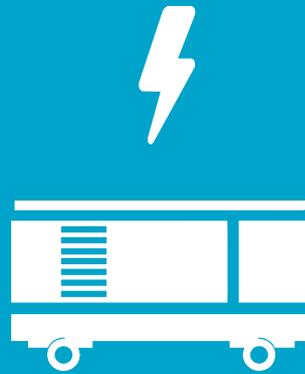


Go electric, whenever possible

Electric equipment typically has a much lower carbon footprint than the equivalent machine powered by fossil fuels such as diesel. Which means that switching to electric machines is an ideal way to limit your carbon emissions when grid power is available. And as an added bonus, you'll also be reducing both air and noise pollution on site.

Going electric also has other benefits. In general, electric equipment is cheaper to maintain. Making it good for your finances and good for society.

It has been estimated that almost 50% of the fuel used in industrial operations could be replaced by electricity. So assessing the possibilities for going electric can be a good step towards more efficient and more sustainable operations.



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Reduce transport emissions

For many companies, the transport of raw materials and/or finished goods is an inevitable part of doing business. Luckily, there are a few ways you can reduce the associated emissions:

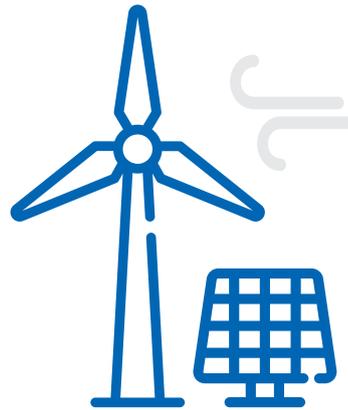
- Use fuel-efficient vehicles that produce low emissions, or electric vehicles
- Make sure trucks are fully loaded at all times. If your own production is insufficient by itself, think about pooling your logistics with neighboring companies
- Look into ways to remove or lighten packaging to decrease payload.



Use renewable energy

A major source of greenhouse gas emissions is burning fossil fuels for energy. Investing in renewable energy—such as solar and wind—is an easy way to significantly reduce your business' carbon footprint. Most energy providers offer a green tariff, so using renewable energy has the potential to lower your operating expenses. And don't be afraid to encourage your suppliers to follow your lead. Do they use renewable energy as well? And/or other solutions for reducing the footprint of their own services?

Renewable energy also has a lower risk of disruptions in supply, since it is less susceptible to bad weather or other environmental factors. For example, when one windmill is out of service, others can compensate for the lost energy.



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Switch to sustainable suppliers

You don't have to do everything yourself. You can make just as big a difference by influencing those around you. Starting with the suppliers you work with in your daily operations. A first step? Look for suppliers with ISO 14001 certification. This certification indicates that an environmental management is at the heart of the company's Quality Management Systems, and that they are actively working towards boosting their resource efficiency and reducing waste. A good way to make sure that your supplier's targets are aligned with yours.

Did you know that up to 90% of most companies' greenhouse-gas emissions come from indirect emissions across the whole value chain? By focusing on a sustainable supply chain and switching to sustainable suppliers, you can often make an even bigger difference to your own footprint.



Minimize waste

Many offices consume vast amounts of paper. According to the environmental awareness group The World Counts, around 50% of all business waste is paper. Take action to cut down paper usage, especially by reducing printing and increasing digitization. Start by linking your accounting systems to those of your suppliers, so that things like invoicing and contract signing can be done entirely online. You'll not only save time but also vast amounts of paper.

But what about the rest? Carry out an audit of your facility. Work backwards from the waste you produce and make an assessment of the supply chain for those items that become waste. Did you know that one third of waste in developed countries, for example, comes from packaging? One solution is to reduce your reliance on single-use packaging and switch to reusable packaging wherever possible.



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So what's next?

The environment is everyone's business. And being aware of our impact is the first step towards protecting it.

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You might not be able to become a carbon-neutral company overnight. But every small effort you take in your operations on a daily basis will ultimately add up to a big difference at the end of the road.



Want to hear more about how you can reduce your ecological footprint? Contact Atlas Copco Specialty Rental today!