

## Houston Outlines Comprehensive Emissions Reduction Plan

Introduced gradually after Democratic Mayor Bill White -- former U.S. Deputy Secretary of Energy (1993-95) -- began the first of his three two-year terms in 2004, Houston's sustainability programs have now become the cornerstone of his detailed Multi-Pollutant Emission Reduction Plan, which envisions at least an 11-percent cut in greenhouse gases from their 2005 level by 2010, with deeper cuts likely when the city adds green measures and expands mass transit, reports Houston Chronicle writer Matthew Tresaugue, as if incredulous that "Houston, of all places, suddenly has a sweeping plan to fight global warming."

Mayor White doesn't think anyone should be surprised.

"Houston has done more concrete things in the last several years to reduce the emissions than many, many other cities," he said, mentioning its reduced energy use and an ongoing shift to wind power, two key goals his plan will advance further while measuring progress from 2005 benchmarks.

Coming "amid increasing frustration with the federal response to global warming," the writer observes, the plan aims "to reduce this smoggy, sprawling city's impact on the climate" with 14 strategies.

Under a current contract, the city can buy enough wind-generated power to meet one-third and up to half of its annual electricity needs.

Retrofits of 271 city facilities will reduce their energy use by 30 percent.

Incandescent bulbs at 2,450 intersections will be replaced with Light Emitting Diode (LED) ones, which are 75 percent more energy efficient.

Implementation of an Environmental Management System (EMS) at the city's three airports will reduce emissions and improve overall environmental performance.

Citywide lighting retrofit will save about 9.8 kilowatt-hours (kWh).

Energy efficient vending machines and vending misers will be saving more than 265,000 kWh a year.

The city is requiring Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification for construction of city buildings to make them between 25 and 30 percent more energy efficient.

A Combined Heat and Power (CHP) system at wastewater treatment facilities will reduce both their energy consumption and gas emissions.

Accelerated replacement of older, high-mileage heavy fleet vehicles will reduce tailpipe emissions and improve fleet reliability and cost-effectiveness.

The same applies to about 1,600 light-duty vehicles that will be replaced with their gasoline-electric hybrid equivalents by 2010.

Under the state's \$150 million Texas Emission Reduction Plan (TERP), Houston and its five public and private partners in the area's TERP Working Group will seek grants for replacement of some 200 units of diesel equipment with "green" ones, which emit 35 percent less oxides of nitrogen (NOx).

The city will continue work to use emerging hybrid technology to reduce emissions from its all almost 2,800 diesel-powered heavy vehicles.

The city will implement a structured recycling program for paper, plastic, metal, glass, and cardboard from all its facilities this year, to save more than 46,000 cubic yards of landfill space and reduce emissions from waste decomposition.

Another 187,000 cubic yards of landfill space will be saved by 2010, thanks to expansion of curbside collection of wood, plant and yard waste citywide.

Since the strategies have already been launched, the mayor's plan doesn't need approval by the City Council, the writer notes, quoting his environmental and health policy director Elena Marks.

"While we have undertaken all of these initiatives, we've taken them for many different reasons. We hadn't captured what the emissions reduction would be," she said, explaining that the city chose 2005 for an emissions benchmark because some data for earlier years were unavailable.

Area environmentalists, the writer reports, see the plan as a bold step and a possible model for other cities.

"If you were the mayor of Houston, would you raise the flag for global warming?" asked Houston Climate Protection Alliance official Nan Hildreth. "But he has."

Sierra Club's Lone Star Chapter air quality specialist Neil Carman would prefer a 1990 benchmark but thought "it's great that the city of Houston is making such a major stab at getting a comprehensive plan in place, even if 2005 is the baseline."

Galveston-Houston Association for Smog Prevention Executive Director Matthew Tejada agreed. "That's the kind of mindset," he said, "that more institutions and companies in the region should have."

See the plan and the mayor's announcement of a Million Trees + Houston campaign at [www.greenhoustontx.gov/](http://www.greenhoustontx.gov/) and [www.houstontx.gov/](http://www.houstontx.gov/). -- Houston Chronicle 10/2/2008