

GREEN GLOSSARY

As you implement or expand your green program, you will undoubtedly encounter some unfamiliar terms. Below are some basic definitions to get you started.

Biodegradable

Item, when left alone, will break down and absorb into the ecosystem.

Carbon or Environmental Footprint

The total amount of greenhouse gases, usually expressed in equivalent tons of carbon dioxide (CO₂), produced to directly and indirectly support human activities. This includes greenhouse gases produced through vehicle emissions, electricity use and fuel consumption. The bigger the footprint the greater the contribution to global warming.

Carbon Offsetting

The act of mitigating the greenhouse gas emissions you produce from your activities, from transportation to energy use, through payment of a fee to fund projects that reduce overall greenhouse gas emissions.

Climate Change

Increase in global surface temperature caused by man-made greenhouse gas emissions

Composting

A process whereby organic wastes, including food and paper, decompose naturally, resulting in a produce rich in minerals and ideal for gardening and farming as a soil conditioner, mulch, resurfacing material, or landfill cover

Corporate Social Responsibility

Corporate initiative to assess and take responsibility for the company's effects on the environment and impact on social welfare. The term generally applies to company efforts that go beyond what may be required by regulators or environmental protection groups.

Energy Efficiency

Methods and technology that can reduce the amount of electricity or fuel used to do the same amount of work.

Fossil Fuel

A fuel that is derived from the decomposition of fossilized plants and animals. Fossil fuels include coal, oil and natural gas.

Global Warming

Increase in global surface temperature caused by man-made greenhouse gas emissions.

Green

Green refers to practices, processes, and products that have minimal impact on the health of the ecosystem. The emphasis is on non-hazardous, recyclable, reusable, and energy efficient products and processes.

Green House Gases (GHG)

Certain pollutants that act like a blanket, trapping heat at the earth's surface. Examples include carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide, fluorocarbons.

Green Supply Chain

A network of retailers, distributors, transporters, storage facilities and suppliers that all adhere to certain levels of environmental responsibility while participating in the production, delivery and sale of a product.

Greenwashing

A term merging the concepts of “green” (environmentally sound) and “whitewashing” (to conceal or gloss over wrongdoing). Greenwashing is any form of marketing or public relations that presents a positive association with environmental issues for an unsustainable product, service, or practice.

Life Cycle Assessment (LCA)

A methodology used to evaluate the environmental consequences of a product or activity holistically, across its entire life. Conducting an LCA will identify where in the process has the biggest environmental impact. This may also be known as a cradle-to-grave analysis.

Photovoltaic Panels

solar panels that convert sunlight into electricity. Power is produced when sunlight strikes the semiconductor material and creates an electrical current.

Recycling

Process of collecting, sorting, and reprocessing old material into usable raw materials.

Renewable Energy

Energy that is derived from resources that are naturally regenerative or are practically inexhaustible, such as biomass, heat (geothermal, solar, thermal gradient), moving water (hydro, tidal and wave power) and wind energy. Municipal solid waste may also be considered a source of renewable (thermal) energy.

Sustainability

Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Though sometimes used interchangeably with the term “green,” sustainability is a resource management issue.

Triple Bottom Line

Model of corporate social responsibility reporting that focuses on People, Planet, Profits (Environment, Economics, Equity).

For more green vocabulary words, we recommend visiting the following green online dictionaries:

[Environmental Protection Agency - Glossary](#)

[LifeGoggles](#)