



## San Diego's carbon footprint bigger than L.A.

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***By Hoa Quach***

San Diegans release more carbon emissions than Los Angeles residents, a recent study shows.

According to the study, the average San Diegan used 1.630 tons of carbon in 2005 and the average Los Angeles resident used 1.413 in the same year.

Los Angeles had the second smallest carbon footprint per capita out of the 100 largest U.S. metropolitan areas surveyed, immediately behind Honolulu. The carbon footprint of a San Diego resident ranks No. 10. But, when it comes to carbon emissions released from transportation, San Diego ranks No. 29 at 1.270 tons, with San Antonio at 1.255 and at 1.295.

The study, conducted by the Brookings Institute, rates carbon emissions among transportation and residential usage.

“A carbon footprint is the impact that human consumption has on the environment in terms of emissions through carbon dioxide and other gases that harm the atmosphere,” said Center on Policy Initiatives’ director of research and policy Murtaza Baxamusa.

The reasons vary why San Diegans have a larger carbon footprint than their Los Angeles counterparts, said Baxamusa, who also authored a policy brief titled “Climate Change Performance and Policy: San Diego versus Los Angeles.”

In his research, Baxamusa discovered more San Diegans drive personal vehicles than use public transportation.

“San Diegans traveled [approximately] 1,500 miles more than an average person in Los Angeles, so this generates a lot more emissions in terms of cars on the freeway ...” Baxamusa said.

The findings come as no surprise.

Baxamusa said it's no shock San Diegans have a larger carbon footprint because the county has a poor public transportation system.

Other than transportation, the Brookings study factors in carbon emissions through residential usage - a number in which San Diego also ranks below Los Angeles.

A possible reason as to why the results are true is because Los Angeles has encouraged their residents to undo their green-unfriendly ways (see chart), Baxamusa said.

San Diego: Comparison of green policies in the two cities. (Center on Policy Initiatives)

Comparison of green policies in the two cities. (Center on Policy Initiatives) THIS IS A CHART

“What we did in our comparison is to establish a framework to compare policies in San Diego and Los Angeles to see what drives energy consumption and emissions,” Baxamusa said. “What we see is that in San Diego the policy program is based more on a warranty incentive where as in Los Angeles it is a combination of incentives, standards and public investments.”

Los Angeles officials recently implemented a plan to replace all city light bulbs with light-emitting diode (LED) lights last week. LED lights, which were discovered nearly 80 years ago, haven't become popular until recently and are low-intensive.

Air specialist Andy Hamilton of the County Air Pollution Control said San Diego will implement its General Plan next year, which will encompass ways to reduce our amount of carbon emissions.

Hamilton said the county will reduce their amount of water intake, which uses pumps that produce up to 20 percent of the county's carbon emissions. In addition, the county will change their landfill usage that produces amount of methane gas, which he said “is 23 times more potent” for the environment than carbon dioxide.

Jim Duffy, chief of staff for Ron Roberts, said the county supervisor has played a vital role as a member of the California Air Resources Board. CARB implemented Assembly Bill 32, which requires certain measures to take place in the state that will reduce the amount of emissions released among other aspects that will make California greener.

In 2002 and 2006, the California Renewables Portfolio Standard was implemented by the state senate requiring local officials to implement renewable sources of energy by 20 percent. Last year, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger signed an order mandating a 33 percent increase by 2020. According to Baxamusa, San Diego is at 6 percent at the moment while Los Angeles is at 18 percent. San Diego Gas and Electric said it will not be able to reach the 20 percent mandate.

Despite San Diego's carbon footprint being larger than Los Angeles it is below the national average of 2.60 tons.

SDG&E's communications office did not respond to a request for interview.