

Reduce your carbon footprint

We are all being bombarded by demands to take steps to reduce our carbon footprints – the carbon each of us leaves behind that is contributing to global warming. Change our lights, weatherize our homes, buy energy efficient appliances and cars – or better yet, bike to work.

But it turns out where we live influences our carbon footprint as well.

A Brookings Institute study released recently showed that the average carbon footprint in U.S. metropolitan areas varies greatly, with our own New Jersey and New York region at the lowest end.

News articles cited a variety of reasons for this, but a look at state-to-state data shows that the media, on the whole, missed the point.

To find a clue as to the real driving force behind state differences in carbon, we just need to look to Pennsylvania. A resident of that state produces about 40 percent more greenhouse gases than a resident of the Garden State. This is because New Jersey relies on carbon-free nuclear power for more than half of its electricity, while Pennsylvania depends heavily on carbon-intensive coal.

In most states, electricity production accounts for the largest output of greenhouse gases. Not in New Jersey. Because of nuclear power's key role here, that honor goes instead to the transportation sector.

Transportation contributes a full 50 percent of carbon produced in New Jersey compared to about 14 percent from electric production.

As New Jersey looks to further reduce its carbon footprint, two things are clear:

- We must focus not only on the electric power sector, but also on transportation.
- We must examine thoroughly nuclear

power's role in meeting New Jersey's growing energy needs, including the possibility of building a new nuclear plant.

A broad range of actions will be needed to meet aggressive carbon reduction targets, mostly expanding energy efficiency and renewable energy. But if these top two priorities aren't enough, it may require a new nuclear plant in New Jersey. As policy makers debate how we reach the tough targets established for carbon reductions in our state, we need to start with an honest evaluation of what is working now and how New Jersey's situation is different from that of other states. And we must recognize the benefits of

nuclear power to provide safe, reliable – and clean -- energy for New Jersey.

Meanwhile, consider taking that bike to work.

What's your view? Please let us know at Opinion@PSEG.com



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