



Ministry for the  
**Environment**  
*Manatū Mō Te Taiao*

Taking action on climate change.

**Small acts.  
Big impacts.**

# **Our climate is changing.**

It will take a global effort to reduce the greenhouse gases heating up our planet.

What we do now to reduce our impact on the environment will bring us benefits today as well as a better future. There are many simple actions you can take to help in this important task. Making a difference will require everyday heroes just like you.

This booklet provides many easy and practical tips for getting involved in New Zealand's climate change response, and reducing your emissions and your impact on the environment. Cutting back on emissions can also save you money on your power and fuel bills.



## What is climate change?

Greenhouse gases like carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide act like the outside covering of a greenhouse, trapping heat from the sun. Without these essential gases our planet would be cold like Mars.

Humans contribute to the production of greenhouse gases through activities like driving cars and trucks, farming, burning coal, and cutting down trees.

These activities are increasing the amount of greenhouse gases in our atmosphere, causing Earth not only to heat up, but to heat up at a faster rate than ever before.

This process is often called **'global warming'** but it is better to think of it as **'climate change'** because it is likely to bring about more extreme events – floods, storms, cyclones, droughts and landslips – rather than an increase in temperature alone.

Switch your lightbulbs to energy efficient bulbs – available at any supermarket or DIY store – to help reduce the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions produced through making electricity.



## Take action tips

3

### Getting out and about

Around 18 percent of New Zealand's greenhouse gas emissions come from transport, and most of these are from privately-owned cars. Cut back on the CO<sub>2</sub> you produce and cut your fuel bill.

- Get fit. Walk, cycle or use public transport instead of your car.
- 'Choke the smoke': have your car serviced regularly. Check out: [www.chokethesmoke.govt.nz](http://www.chokethesmoke.govt.nz)
- Remove your car roof rack when not in use, and reduce your fuel bill by up to five percent.
- Go easy on the accelerator to reduce fuel use.
- Keep your tyres inflated at the right pressure.
- Clear out your car boot – the extra weight will add to your fuel bill.
- Car pool and share the fuel bill with friends or workmates.
- Buying a new car? Choose a fuel-efficient, low-polluting model. Check out: [www.fuelsaver.govt.nz](http://www.fuelsaver.govt.nz)

## Our changing climate

Climate change could have significant impacts on our economy, environment and society – the effects of a warming planet and changing climate patterns are already becoming evident.

Glaciers are receding worldwide and seasonal snow and ice cover has reduced in upper parts of the northern hemisphere. If these processes continue, sea levels will rise and inundate many low-lying regions of the world, including Florida, Bangladesh and the Pacific Islands. This could have a devastating flow-on effect to all parts of the world.

Meteorologists are also seeing an increase in the severity of storms, rainfall, droughts and floods around the world.

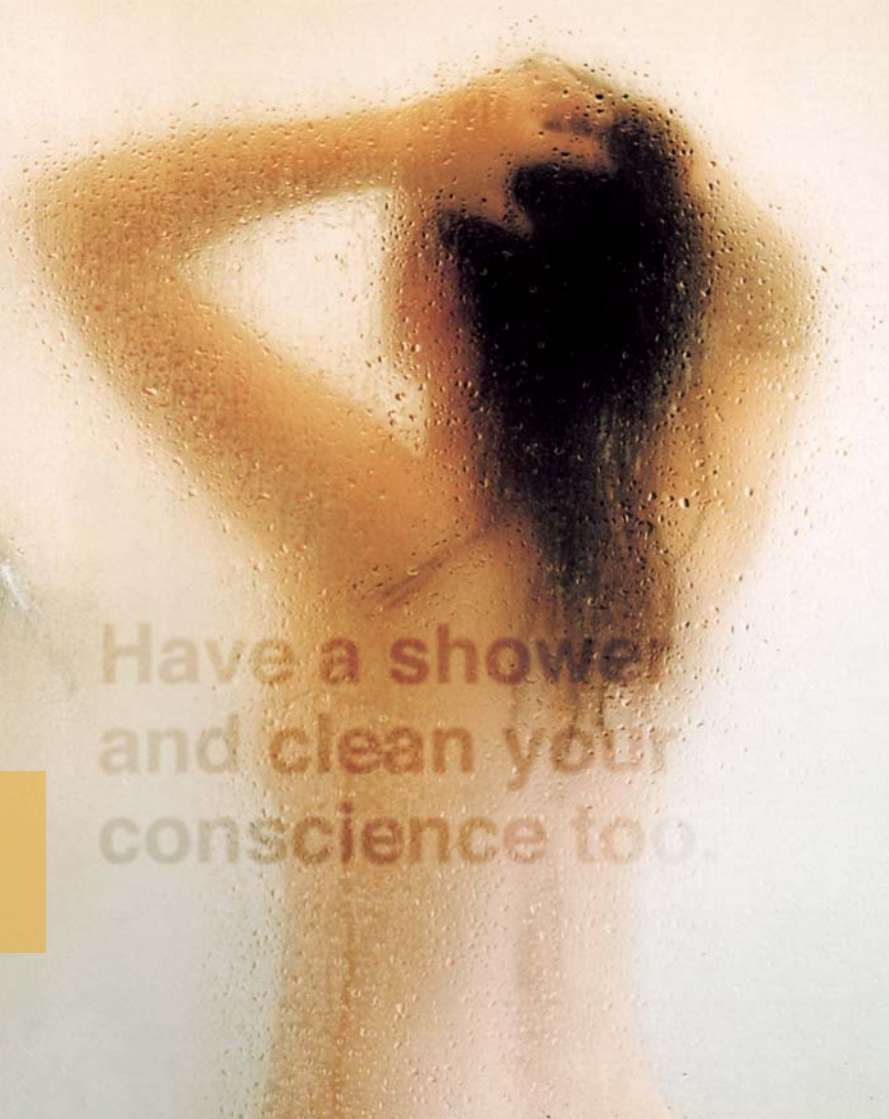
In New Zealand, more extreme weather events are also expected to happen in the future, including more droughts in already drought-prone areas and more floods in regions already vulnerable to flooding. Average temperatures are projected to increase about 1°C by around 2040 and about 2.1°C by around 2090.



**In New Zealand, more extreme weather events are expected to happen in the future.**

By having a shower rather than a bath you use less hot water and reduce the amount of greenhouse gases produced through making electricity.

For more information about the impacts on New Zealand you can read another booklet in this series: **Understanding climate change. Get a grasp of the facts.**



## Take action tips

5

### Cut back on waste

The production of packaging emits greenhouse gases into the atmosphere.

- Buy products with less packaging.
- Recycle paper, glass, tin and plastics.
- Compost your food scraps and feed the garden instead of sending it to the rubbish dump – you'll reduce the methane emissions generated from decomposing waste at your local landfill.
- Use a recyclable or cloth shopping bag at the supermarket.



## Taking action

### A little for a lot

Cutting back on greenhouse gases doesn't mean that we have to give up all the luxuries we are used to. It just means being smarter about their use.

For example, 'Joe' loves his V8 but makes choices about how to minimise its impact on the environment. He bikes to work during the week (getting fit at the same time!), and uses the car only in the weekends.

What can you do in your life to offset the emissions you can't reduce? Reducing emissions offers many positive and long-lasting effects on our lives:

**Cut back on energy use = slash the power bill**

**Use your legs, not the car = get into shape**

**Less pollution = breathe easier**

Essentially, reducing our impact on the environment means we can make our country more sustainable. And that's got to be a good thing. Your actions combined with those of the government, councils and businesses will enable New Zealand to cut emissions and reduce our impact on the environment.

Despite any measures we take to reduce greenhouse gas emissions now, the levels of carbon dioxide already in the atmosphere are expected to continue to affect and change the climate over our lifetimes. This is a cause for action not inaction.

We can still avert the more catastrophic impacts of climate change. Taking action now is like taking out an insurance policy for our future.

Everybody has a role to play in addressing climate change, whether it is the government, businesses, communities or individuals.

There are two main ways we can take action on climate change: reduce our greenhouse gas emissions; and be prepared so we can adapt to the inevitable changes and become more resilient to our current climate. It is important that both kinds of actions are taken. Without reducing our emissions, carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere will continue to rise and affect our climate. And without proper planning, we will be more vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.

Turn off all your lights and electrical appliances when you're not using them to reduce greenhouse emissions and save money on your electricity bill too.

For more information about what preparing and adapting will mean, check out another booklet in this series: [Preparing for and adapting to climate change. Look ahead to the future.](#)

If only you  
could save  
energy by  
just flicking  
a switch.  
Hmmm...



## Take action tips

7

### Save energy

Cutting back on energy use helps reduce the amount of greenhouse gases emitted during the production of electricity. Make your home more energy efficient and save on your power bill.

- Use an insulation wrap on your hot water cylinder.
- Buy appliances with a high Energy Rating. The more stars on the product label, the better the energy efficiency of the appliance.
- Replace your lightbulbs with energy efficient ones.
- Turn off lights and electrical appliances at the wall when you're not using them.
- Wash clothes in cold water and hang them out in the sun to dry.
- Use the dishwasher only when you have a full load, and use the economy option if available.
- Install a solar hot water system.
- Invest in your nest – insulate your home.

## Positive action at work and in your community

Being part of the global effort on climate change is an essential and worthwhile task. If you have already made your home more energy efficient, why not think about getting your workplace or community involved?

At work, improving the management of waste or introducing a policy of turning off lights and computers at night can make a big difference to the environment and to overheads.

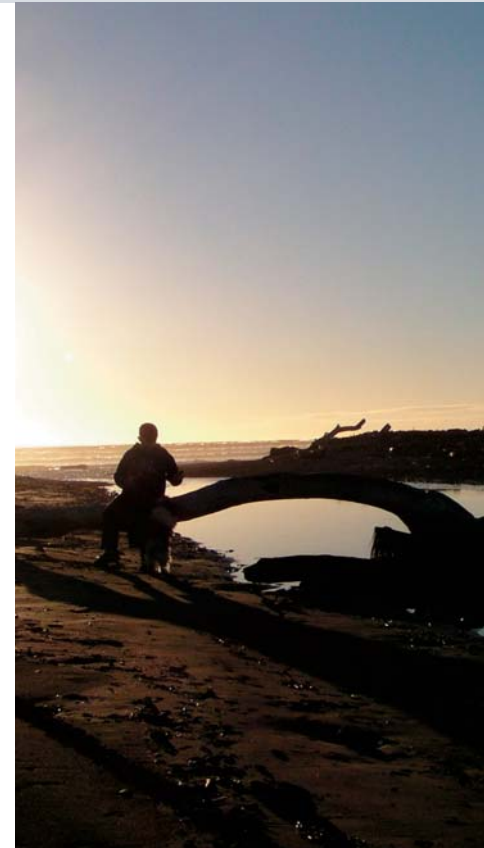
In the community, why not get together a group of like-minded people to take on a project planting native trees or you could set up a car-pooling club? You can also talk to your local council about what you can do to help.

**If you have already made your home more energy efficient, why not think about getting your workplace or community involved?**

The government has already announced a number of practical, everyday measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and more are in development.

The government also wants to talk with New Zealanders about the different options so keep abreast of new developments.

For more information go to:  
[www.climatechange.govt.nz](http://www.climatechange.govt.nz)



## Find out more

### Links

For more tips on how to save energy, cut back on waste, or reduce your fuel bill check out these websites:

Energy Efficiency and Conservation Authority:

[www.eeca.govt.nz](http://www.eeca.govt.nz)

Fuelsaver:

[www.fuelsaver.co.nz](http://www.fuelsaver.co.nz)

Ministry of Transport:

[www.mot.govt.nz](http://www.mot.govt.nz)

Contact us for more information about climate change or new initiatives.

Phone: **(04) 439 7400**

Email: [info@climatechange.govt.nz](mailto:info@climatechange.govt.nz)

Address: **Ministry for the Environment, PO Box 10362, Wellington**

Websites: [www.mfe.govt.nz](http://www.mfe.govt.nz), [www.climatechange.govt.nz](http://www.climatechange.govt.nz)

This booklet is one of a series on climate change. Other titles include:

- **Understanding climate change. Get a grasp of the facts.**
- **Preparing for and adapting to climate change. Look ahead to the future.**

We would welcome your feedback on our publications.

To provide input, please email: [info@climatechange.govt.nz](mailto:info@climatechange.govt.nz)

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