



New Partner Spotlight:

When The Tower Companies, a real estate development firm, realized that an estimated 40% of atmospheric emissions are attributable to buildings, the company decided to demonstrate leadership and join Climate Leaders to reduce its impact on the climate. Through Climate Leaders, the company hopes to show by example how the building industry can take measures to reduce the harmful effects of GHG emissions resulting from the industry's consumption of 40% of raw materials, 40% of energy, and 25% of water in the United States annually.

The Tower Companies joined Climate Leaders in November 2006. Founded in 1947 and currently located in North Bethesda, Maryland, the company employs 35 people and operates 14 facilities. Tower built America's first LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certified apartments, Blair Towns, in Silver Spring, MD, and The Tower Building, the first green office building in Washington, DC. The company focuses on socially responsible development and environmentally conscious buildings and communities when creating its business, residential, retail and mixed-use real estate environments.

Marnie Abramson, Principal of The Tower Companies, summarizes the corporate philosophy driving their business strategy, emphasizing that “over the long term without proper action taken to create sustainable sites, reduce our dependence on fossil fuels and minimize the depletion of natural resources, costs to develop will skyrocket. Combining that with the growth in population demands that the real estate industry embrace new ways of doing business today.”

Joining Climate Leaders helped the company create a plan to identify, track, and reduce its carbon footprint. The company has calculated its GHG emissions using widely accepted methodologies, and has developed an Inventory Management Plan (IMP) that provides guidance on and institutionalizes the process for collecting, calculating, and maintaining GHG data. As a result of this effort, the company was able to recognize that its direct and indirect emissions sources include stationary combustion sources (boilers, backup generators); mobile combustion sources (company-owned fleet vehicles and snow blowers); refrigeration/AC equipment use (chillers); and purchased electricity.

The company has adopted a comprehensive emissions reduction strategy that includes the following components:

1. Construct new buildings in line with green building standards. For example, the company now has over 1 million square feet of green projects. The Tower Companies built America's first LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certified apartments, Blair Towns, in Silver Spring, MD, and built The Tower Building, the first green office building in Washington, DC. Current projects under development include 2000 Tower Oaks Boulevard, the world's largest commercial application of Green/Vedic design and development, which incorporates LEED "Gold" building certification for superior air quality, high recycled content, and energy and water efficiency and 1050 K Street, NW located in one of the most sought after pieces of underdeveloped land in downtown Washington. The 146,000 square foot, 11-floor office building with ground level retail will be LEED Gold Certified.

2. Improve the efficiency of existing equipment when replacement or upgrades are needed.
3. Identify opportunities where solar water heating and power can be implemented at buildings, in collaboration with a local solar energy firm.
4. Purchase wind power using Renewable Energy Certificates (RECs) to offset 100% of the company's electricity use. As ranked by the EPA's Green Power Partnership, The Tower Companies is the 25th largest purchaser of green power in the country.
5. Offset the company's remaining direct emissions, through either purchasing carbon offsets by investing in methane reduction or forestation projects, or by partnering with a local charter school to purchase a more efficient boiler.

This multifaceted reduction strategy forms the basis of The Tower Companies' Climate Leaders goal, announced in March 2007, to achieve net zero U.S. GHG emissions by 2008, and maintain that level through 2012. Abramson hopes that her company's leadership will be a call to action to others, concluding that "We have an obligation to our colleagues, associates, friends and families to responsibly protect the environment we are living in. It is our hope that through our partnership with Climate Leaders, we can show, by example, that as an industry we have one of the largest and most immediate opportunities to dramatically reduce annual carbon dioxide emissions, reduce greenhouse gases, and therefore reduce global warming. We encourage others within our industry, no matter what size, to make a commitment to reduce greenhouse gases."