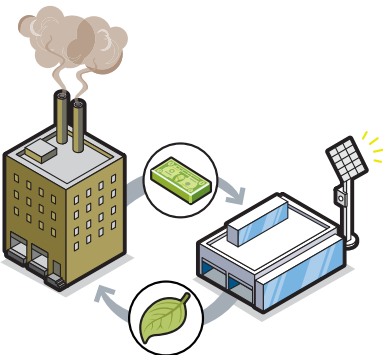


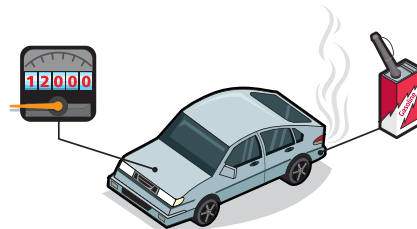
GOING CARBON NEUTRAL

Carbon offset programs let you clean up the environment—even as you continue to pollute it. It seems too good to be true and many are skeptical. But there is a logic to offsets. Here's how they work:



Offsets have their origins in emissions trading programs, in which companies that produce high levels of greenhouse gases (usually large manufacturers) purchase credits from businesses that have lowered their emissions below a certain threshold. The polluting credits are traded on the Chicago Climate Exchange. It's kind of like paying someone to diet for you: At least someone is losing weight. And the overall amount of CO₂ is capped.

More recently, individuals and small businesses are using offsets to "neutralize" the pollution they create when doing things like driving, flying, or heating or cooling their offices and homes. Offset providers have figured out how to put a price tag on your polluting behavior.

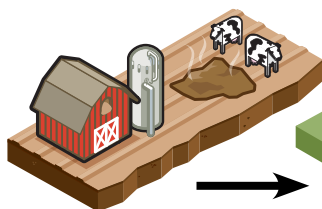


Say you own a 2001 Saab 9-3 and drive 12,000 miles a year (the U.S. average). Given your car's fuel efficiency, you're using nearly 500 gallons of gas a year and sending 9,586 pounds of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. Feeling guilty? TerraPass estimates that it takes \$49.95 to offset 10,000 pounds of CO₂.

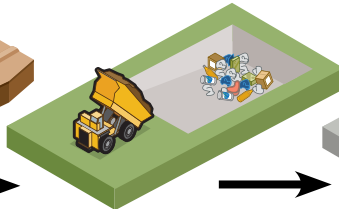
You write a check, the money is put into an environmental project, and your personal CO₂ emissions are "neutralized." Some offset providers use the funds to plant trees. The idea is that they will help remove carbon from the atmosphere once they mature. This approach has drawn criticism, since the carbon offsetting won't happen for many years.



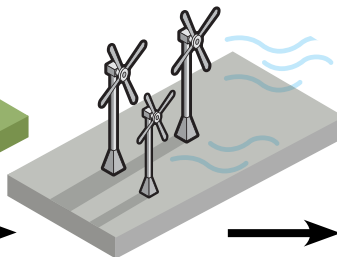
Other providers think more like venture capitalists, using the offset funds to help finance alternative energy projects that are promising but have trouble attracting investors. TerraPass, for example, supports three broad categories of projects.



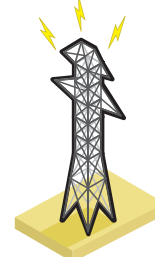
Cow power
Farm-based technology that gathers methane from cow manure and converts it into electricity



Landfills
Projects that capture and burn the methane produced by putrefying garbage



Wind
Offsets are used to purchase electricity from, and finance the development of, wind-power projects.



Powering the grid
Power generated by the farm and wind projects goes directly into the power grid, bringing green power to millions.