

Understanding the number



Join this global movement to solve the climate crisis

350 is one of the single most important numbers in our environment today. Now, www.craftsters.org, along with etsy.com, Coats & Clark (www.coatsandclark.com) and other environmentally conscious organizations, want you to help spread the number 350 throughout your communities.

According to 350.org (www.350.org) this number represents the amount we must reduce the carbon dioxide in the atmosphere -- 350 parts per million, before huge and irreversible damage is caused to the earth.

Craftsters.org and sponsors want you to use your creativity to stop global warming and help raise awareness by participating in the Creativity 350 challenge. Craft up a t-shirt or a project that creatively expresses the importance of 350 and enter today. From sewing to knitting and pasta art to Popsicle sticks, use any craft technique, snap a photo of your creation and upload it at craftsters.org by August 15.

Then, get everyone you know to visit craftsters.org between August 16 and August 31 to vote for your 350 project and you could win one of many prizes including a kit to make your own



Coats & Clark

Gourmet Grocery tote and reusable grocery bags featuring Coats & Clark thread and beautiful Westminster fabrics or a collection of Coats & Clark Eco-friendly yarns (both prize packages have a retail value of \$100), among other earth-saving items. Winners will be announced September 25. To learn more, visit www.craftsters.org or www.coatsandclark.com.

FACTS ABOUT 350

• So, what is global warming and what's the problem anyway?

The science is clear: global warming is happening faster than ever and humans are responsible. Global warming is caused by releasing what are called greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. The most common greenhouse gas is carbon dioxide. Many of the activities we do every day (like turning the lights on, cooking food, or heating/cooling our homes) relies on energy sources such as coal and oil that emit carbon dioxide and other heat-trapping gases. This is a major problem because global warming destabilizes the delicate balance that makes life on this planet possible. Just a few degrees in temperature can completely change the world as we know it, and threaten the lives of millions of people around the world. But don't give up hope! You can help stop global warming by taking action at 350.org.

• And what does this 350 number even mean?

350 is the number leading scientists say is the safe upper limit for carbon dioxide -- measured in "Parts Per Million" in our atmosphere. 350 PPM -- it's the number humanity needs to get back to as soon as possible to avoid runaway climate change.

• If we're already past 350, are we all doomed?

No. We're like the patient that goes to the doctor and learns he's overweight or his cholesterol is too high. He doesn't die immediately -- but until he changes his lifestyle and gets back down to the safe zone, he's at more risk for heart attack or stroke. The planet is in its danger zone because we've poured too much carbon into the atmosphere, and we're starting to see signs of real trouble: melting ice caps, rapidly spreading drought. We need to scramble back as quickly as we can to safety.

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• How do we get the world on track to get to 350?

We need an international agreement to reduce carbon emissions fast. The United Nations is working on a treaty, which is supposed to be completed in December of 2009 at a conference in Copenhagen, Denmark. But the current plans for the treaty are much too weak to get us back to safety. This treaty needs to put a high enough price on carbon that we stop using so much. It also needs to make sure that poor countries are ensured a fair chance to develop.

• OK, but how do we actually reduce carbon emissions to get to 350?

Make no mistake -- getting back to 350 means transforming our world. It means building solar arrays instead of coal plants, it means planting trees instead of clear-cutting rainforests, it means increasing efficiency and decreasing our waste. Getting to 350 means developing a thousand different solutions -- all of which will become much easier if we have a global treaty grounded in the latest science and built around the principles of equity and justice. To get this kind of treaty, we need a movement of people who care enough about our shared global future to get involved and make their voices heard.

• Will this thing work? Will world leaders listen?

Only if we're loud enough. If we can make this number known across the planet, that mere fact will exert some real pressure on negotiators. We need people to understand that 350 marks either success or failure for these climate negotiations. It's not an easy fight -- the other side has the power of the fossil fuel industry. But we think the voice of ordinary people will be heard, if it's loud enough. That's all of our job -- to make enough noise that we can't be easily ignored.

• Where did this 350 number come from?

Dr. James Hansen, of NASA, the United States' space agency, has been researching global warming longer than just about anyone else. He was the first to publicly testify before the U.S. Congress, in June of 1988, that global warming was real. He and his colleagues have used both real-world observation, computer simulation, and mountains of data about ancient climates to calculate what constitutes dangerous quantities of carbon in the atmosphere. The Bush Administration has tried to keep Hansen and his team from speaking publicly, but their analysis has been widely praised by other scientists, and by experts like Nobel Prize winner Al Gore.

• Isn't America the biggest source of the problem? What about China and India?

Yes -- America has been producing more CO₂ than any other country, and leads the industrialized world in per capita emissions. Even though China now produces as much CO₂ annually, the U.S. still produces many times more carbon per person than China, India, and most other countries. And America has blocked meaningful international action for many years. That's why many people at 350.org have worked hard to change U.S. policy -- they staged more than 2,000 demonstrations in all 50 states in 2007, and helped spur Congress to pass the first real laws to reduce CO₂. Now they need help from around the world to persuade both the U.S. and the U.N. to continue the process.

China and India and the rest of the developing world need to be involved. But since per capita they use far less energy than the West, and have been doing so for much shorter periods of time, and are using fossil fuels to pull people out of poverty, their involvement needs to be different. The West is going to have to use some tiny percentage of the wealth it built up filling the atmosphere with carbon to transfer technology north to south so that these countries can meet their legitimate development needs without burning all their coal.

• 350 is just a number. Wouldn't "Climate Emergency" or "Clean Energy Now" be a better call to action?

350 translates into many languages -- numerals are among the few things most people around the world recognize. More to the point, 350 tells us what we need to do. Far from boring, it's the most important number in the world. It contains, rightly understood, the recipe for a very different world, one that moves past cheap fossil fuel to more sensible technologies, more closely-knit communities, and a more equitable global society.

• Why another organization -- there are already too many things going on!

It's true, there are lots of organizations and individuals working hard to solve the climate crisis. This is great news -- it means we don't really need to build a movement from scratch because it's already bubbling up all over the world. We simply hope we can shine a spotlight on the work of existing organizations, highlighting everyone's incredible work and knitting these many efforts together for a powerful and unified call to action -- a call that is global, scientific, and specific. By providing a common platform with the 350 target, we can help to stitch together a whole that is truly greater than the sum of its parts, a diverse movement that speaks with one collective voice. 🐝

Facts reprinted from www.350.org.