

TOKYO GOVT MAY MEASURE FIRMS' CO2 LEVELS

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The Tokyo metropolitan government is considering introducing a new measure against global warming--rating large business facilities in Tokyo according to their voluntary efforts to reduce carbon dioxide. The metropolitan government intends to introduce the system in April 2005. Tokyo's CO2 emissions in 2001 amounted to 60.6 million tons, or about 5 percent of the country's total CO2 emissions. The amount increased by 5.1 percent compared with that of 1990 mainly due to the increase in the number of users at home with personal computers. Under the 1997 Kyoto Protocol, Japan is required to cut greenhouse gas emissions by 6 percent below the 1990 level by 2012. With this goal in mind, the metropolitan government incorporated into its basic environmental plan drafted in January 2002 the same 6 percent goal of greenhouse gas reduction in Tokyo by 2010.

To achieve the goal, Tokyo Gov. Shintaro Ishihara proposed in November 2002 a policy that would require large business facilities in Tokyo to reduce CO2 emissions. The Tokyo government's advisory council on the environment also has been discussing such a system. But council members from the industrial sector opposed the requirement because, they said, the new system is aimed solely at large business facilities. "The reduction of CO2 emissions will cost us a lot of money because we have to invest in plants and equipment to meet the goal," one member said.

"If the metropolitan government only introduces this system, the competitiveness of Tokyo's large business facilities would suffer," another member said. In response to such concerns, the metropolitan government has offered know-how to help offset the amount of investment needed for plants and equipment. But it could not present any concrete details for the program, mainly due to lack of preparedness.

One member in the council said if the metropolitan government abandons the 6 percent goal on these companies, Tokyo's environmental measures would regress. But in the end, the metropolitan government gave up on trying to impose the requirement. It is difficult to attain 6 percent reduction of greenhouse gas only with the current efforts being made by industry. When the metropolitan government urged about 800 large business facilities in Tokyo to submit their voluntary reduction plans for greenhouse gases, their average reduction rate from fiscal 2002 to fiscal 2004 was only 2 percent.

As a result, the metropolitan government incorporated the council's draft proposals announced in late February in a system to rate efforts by large business facilities in Tokyo to reduce CO2 discharged from these facilities with the aim of encouraging voluntary reductions.

According to the proposals, the metropolitan government will carry out ratings three times--when it sets its goals, two or three years later and five years after the goals are set, making public the results on its Web site.

A senior official of the metropolitan government's environmental bureau said: "The larger the size of a company, the more sensitive it is to its reputation for its environmental conservation efforts. A company doesn't want to be labeled as reluctant to take such measures. I think the rating system would bring about the same effects as would result if the metropolitan government had imposed the goal on them." The outline set by the central government to promote measures against global warming incorporated measures by various fields including industry, the transportation sector and the general public. But in reality, the rise in greenhouse gases cannot be stopped at present.

The initiative taken by the government of Tokyo, where industries are concentrated and about 10 percent of the nation's population lives, deserves praise. The metropolitan government wants to start the system in April 2005. But as it took too much time for the council to discuss the costs and benefits of imposition of the goal, the metropolitan government has yet to decide what standards should be set for the ratings. In addition, the metropolitan government has not created a favorable tax environment to encourage businesses to reduce greenhouse gases. It is necessary for the metropolitan government to present a clear vision to address these problems. Efforts are needed to promote the new system with society at large as well as industry.

CITIES, TRIBES TEAM UP FOR RENEWABLE ENERGY

SolarAccess.com

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Organizations representing 150 American cities interested in climate protection and Indian tribes interested in developing renewable energy projects announced a campaign for national security through energy independence. This July, participating cities and tribes will deliver their declaration of energy independence to the White House door, as part of a broader effort to promote tapping one of the world's richest clean energy resources - the wind blowing through Indian reservations in the Great Plains to supply clean energy to U.S. cities to reduce green house gas emissions.

The Energy Independence Day Campaign seeks to hasten the day when America is energy secure and independent with the production of clean, emission-free renewable energy. This joint campaign promotes tribally-owned clean energy projects to help meet the emission reduction goals of U.S. cities, according to Susan Ode, Outreach Director for ICLEI - Local Governments for Sustainability, which leads the U.S. Cities for Climate Protection - CCP program.

"Our goal is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from the burning of fossil fuels and other human activities through local actions designed to address global warming and improve the quality of life in our communities," Ode said. Over 150 U.S. cities have pledged to voluntarily reduce their carbon emissions through conservation, energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy. "American Indians recognize the value of renewable energy in addressing climate change and in building sustainable homeland economies," said Patrick Spears, president of the Intertribal Council On Utility Policy. "This campaign will bring rural tribes and local urban governments together for renewable generation and carbon emissions reductions."

Intertribal COUP is composed of federally recognized Indian tribes in the Dakotas and Nebraska, with affiliated tribes throughout the West. The organization promotes renewable energy policies based on tribal self-determination and ecological sustainability. COUP, working with Honor the Earth, is leading a collaborative intertribal effort for some 3,000 MW of tribally-owned windpower to be built on two-dozen Indian reservations across the Great Plains by 2010, according to Bob Gough, COUP secretary. "Bringing tribes from all across the country with tremendous renewable resources together with cities seeking to reduce the burning of fossil based fuels has created a natural alliance for true homeland energy security," Gough said.

The Energy Independence Day Campaign is open to any tribe, city or local government willing to commit to producing or promoting the purchase of utility scale renewable energy. Local governments and tribes can participate in the campaign through endorsement of the Declaration of Energy Independence, along with educational and promotional outreach, conservation and energy efficiency, or renewable energy purchases. Interested city and tribal representatives are

scheduled to convene during the Denver March Pow-Wow on March 19th for a press conference and to officially endorse the Declaration of Energy Independence, which will be circulated among local governments throughout the country and be delivered to the White House on the 4th of July.