

Frequently Asked Questions about the **Providence Climate Agreement** & [Pledge Form](#)

Overall Questions

1. **Q: Do I have to add all this up?**

A: No, we will calculate the total Carbon Dioxide (CO₂) emission reductions of your pledge on the back end after you enter this form.

2. **Q: Can I hand this in later? How?**

A: You can always fill out another pledge form and add more actions later, if you decide to make additional pledges.

3. **Q: Where did the 2 million pounds number come from in the goal?**

A: Our goal of 2 million pounds of Carbon Dioxide (CO₂) emission reduction is based on the *Low Carbon Diet: A 30 Day Program to Lose 5000 Pounds* by David Gershon. We can reach our goal, for example, when 400 individuals or households commit to actions that will create an average annual emissions drop of 5000 pounds of CO₂. We will provide resources including the *Low Carbon Diet* book to help people find actions they can take, and we will give everyone a way to submit their action pledges to us so that we can track our progress toward our goal. It won't be easy, but we believe we can do this if we work together and bring more and more people into the Providence Climate Agreement.

4. **Q: How will I know what I pledged after I hand in my form?**

A: We will be emailing you a copy of your pledges later. You can also take notes for yourself on paper.

5. **Q: How did you get these numbers?**

A: Most of these numbers come from the *Low Carbon Diet* book (though a few come from other carbon-reduction plans). Take a look at the book to find the resources behind a particular number. For most of these, we are working with average households and average emissions. No, it's not exact, but it helps us to estimate and track the changes we are making together.

6. **Q: How do the pledge form and the book relate? Is there more in the book I should look at?**

A: The pledge form pulls out ideas from the *Low Carbon Diet* book and puts them into concise wording. The book goes into more detail and can help you understand the context. The book also has some additional actions that are not on the pledge form (which you could add to the "other" section of the pledge form if you like). The book gives more suggestions for how to get others involved, too. The book is an ongoing reference, and also gives you tips about how to do the low carbon diet with a group.

7. **Q: Do I include things I'm already doing in the pledge form?**

A: Keep doing all the great stuff you are doing! For the purposes of the Providence Climate Agreement, we're aiming to collectively reduce carbon emissions from our current levels, so please include in your pledge form only new actions/commitments. See the next question for more ideas:

8. **Q: I'm doing a lot of this stuff. Are there other things I can do?**

A: Yes! For starters, are there other people, groups, or institutions that you could get to sign on to the PCA and make some of these changes? (See the *Low Carbon Diet* book section 3 "Empowering Others" for ideas about how to do this.)

A: Yes! There are a lot more things you can do individually. If you need help getting ideas, write

comments or questions in the box on the form for additional support/resources. If you have ideas in mind, you can research the carbon savings and add that to the “other” line on the form.

9. **Q: I’m a renter, not a homeowner, so I don’t have control over a lot of this. What can I do?**

A: First, focus on the many parts of the pledge form you do have control over. Look particularly at the first section and the transportation section. Also think about ways that you could seal drafts, even if you don’t have the ability to re-insulate where you live. Look also at the “Additional Pledges” section.

A: Secondly, reach out to your landlord or property management company with suggestions for improvements that would increase efficiency, especially when you know a repair or replacement may be happening. Remind them of the financial benefits: If your landlord pays for utilities, they save in the long run with energy efficiency. If tenants pay the utilities, the property owner can use the energy efficiency as a selling point for potential tenants, since it means they will save money on utilities.

A: Third, think beyond the home. See the question above “I’m doing a lot of this stuff. Are there other things I can do?”

10. **Q: What if I share a house with someone?**

A: Will they also be pledging? If not, you can put all of the savings on your own form. If you do share a house with someone, look out for items that impact a whole household where you would check simply “yes, I will do this” on the form. For those items (for example, replacing an appliance or insulating your house), make sure only one person in your household submits that item on their form. For items like replacing light bulbs, where you enter a number indicating how much you can do, you can each of you can put down a portion of the total (for example two housemates each put down 5 lightbulbs when you plan to change 10 total in the house). For personal changes, like shower length or eating vegetarian, you each make your own pledges.

Pledge-specific questions - Sections 1 and 2


11. **Q: What does the form mean by reducing warm/hot washer loads? Does that mean doing fewer loads of wash, or using cold water instead of warm or hot?**


A: You can use the same credit for either dropping a warm/hot washer load entirely each week or for changing it to cold water instead of hot or warm, since 90% of the energy used for a washer load in hot water goes to heating the water. (See the “Wear it Again Sam” topic in the *Low Carbon Diet* book for more.)

12. **Q: How do I measure a gallon of trash?**

A: Most trash bags are sold in a quantity of gallons, so find out what size trash bags or trash can you use and use that to estimate.

13. **Q: What is a CFL?**

A: CFL stands for Compact Fluorescent Lightbulb. These are the lightbulbs that look like  and

use much less energy than incandescent bulbs  . LEDs (light emitting diode bulbs) use the lowest energy of the three.

14. **Q: For the one about switching from meat to vegetarian meals, do I have to eat vegetarian for all meals in a day or can it be just one meal in a day?**

A: This carbon reduction amount is for all meals for a day, equalling 700 lbs/year. So if you want to do just one meal a week, you can enter .33 (to represent a third of a day) in the blank for this question. (*Low Carbon Diet* book section “Chew on this for a while”)

15. **Q: If I eat vegetarian one day a week, but the place where I eat is still serving meat three times a day, should I count that as a carbon reduction?**

A: Yes, still credit yourself for this pledge. As a next step, you could work with others to see about making a change at the institutional level.

16. **Q: What is a carbon offset?**

A: Instead of making a change yourself, you are paying someone else to make the change for you. For example, some carbon offsets fund reforestation projects. See www.carbonfund.org for options or the *Low Carbon Diet* book section “Carbon Neutral”.

Transportation Section

17. **Q: What if I don’t know my car’s Miles per Gallon (MPG)?**

A: You can search for your car’s make and model mpg. Check out www.fueleconomy.gov. If that doesn’t work, average car MPG is 22.

18. **Q: What if I don’t know how much I drive in a year?**

A: The *Low Carbon Diet* book has some suggestions for how to figure it out. (See *Low Carbon Diet* book section “Think before you go”)

A: You can fill out another pledge form later to add on your transportation activities if you’d like to just focus on everything else for now.

19. **Q: What if I share a car with someone?**

A: Do you share a car, but drive places separately? If so, estimate just the miles you drive.

A: Do you share a car, and drive together everywhere or almost everywhere? If so, divide the car’s annual mileage in half.

Here is a quick guide to finding the *Low Carbon Diet* book section that aligns with a part of the pledge form. Different editions of the book have numbered the sections differently, so use the table of contents in your book to find page number for each chapter.

Action	<i>Low Carbon Diet</i> book chapter
Plant trees	CARBON NEUTRAL
Reduce warm/hot clothes washer loads	WEAR IT AGAIN SAM
Reduce non-recyclable solid waste	DUMPING ON GARBAGE
Set water heater to 120 degrees	MEET YOUR WATER HEATER
Replace incandescent light bulb with CFL	LIGHT OF YOUR LIFE
Replace incandescent bulb with LED	
Install low-flow shower head	AM I CLEAN YET?
Reduce weekly clothes dryer loads	WEAR IT AGAIN SAM
Reduce shower time to 5 minutes	AM I CLEAN YET?
Turn thermostat down in winter	BETTER A SWEATER

Turn thermostat up in summer	CHILL-IN
I will use power strips or unplug to turn my appliances all the way off	PLUG YOUR ELECTRICITY LEAKS*
Switch from meat to vegetarian meals	CHEW ON THIS FOR A WHILE*
Recycle 100% of household recyclables	DUMPING ON GARBAGE
Buy carbon offsets	CARBON NEUTRAL

Do Even More	Low Carbon Diet book chapter
Replace TV with Energy Star TV	
Replace dishwasher with Energy Star dishwasher	SCRUB-A-DUB TUB
Insulate hot water heater	MEET YOUR WATER HEATER
Tune-up furnace	FURNACE FLING
Replace washing machine with Energy Star front load clothes washer	WEAR IT AGAIN SAM
Replace refrigerator with Energy Star refrigerator	A SUSTAINABILITY ENERGY HOUSEHOLD
Replace air conditioner with Energy Star air conditioner	CHILL-IN
Thoroughly seal the air leaks in your home	CHILL OUT
Install storm or high-efficiency windows	A SUSTAINABILITY ENERGY HOUSEHOLD
Insulate your walls and attic	A SUSTAINABILITY ENERGY HOUSEHOLD
Replace furnace with energy efficient furnace	FURNACE FLING
Install a solar hot water heater	MEET YOUR WATER HEATER

Transportation	Low Carbon Diet book chapter
Keep car engine tuned up and maintain tire air pressure	IS YOUR CAR PHYSICALLY FIT?
Reduce your driving by 20%	THINK BEFORE YOU GO
Purchase a more efficient car	BEFRIEND AN EARTH-SMART AUTO

*These sections not in latest edition of the book.