People + Planet

Carbon Neutral Now. Carbon Negative Next.

Today, Steelcase announced we have achieved carbon neutrality throughout our own operations. We are going even further, having set aggressive science-based targets in line with the most ambitious goal of the Paris Agreement.

By Jim Keane, former Steelcase President and CEO

Read 4 minutes

Climate change is a complex global problem and our collective approach right now will determine the impact on our planet for decades to come. As of this year, we achieved carbon neutrality in our own operations by removing as much carbon as we emit. We know true climate action is based on science which is why we went even further by setting targets approved by the Science Based Targets initiative positioning us to become carbon negative (or climate positive) by 2030. Our comprehensive strategy is as ambitious as it is historic for our company.

We have stayed steadfast in our resolve to make a difference even amid a pandemic. And we cannot do this alone. We intend to work with our network of customers and suppliers to multiply the impact we can have when others join us on this mission.

BOLD GOALS

Over the next decade, we will focus on significantly reducing emissions with targets that are in line with what climate science shows us is the rate needed to prevent the worst impacts of climate change. To accomplish this over the next decade, we plan to improve energy usage, reduce waste in our operations and align company behavior and decisions to support this strategy. Since most of our emissions are considered indirect, we will work with our suppliers to set their targets.

We intend to:

Reduce absolute emissions from our operations by 50% by 2030.

Cut indirect emissions from business travel and waste generated in operations.

Engage with suppliers to set their own science-based targets by 2025.

Read more specifics in the sustainability section of our website.

Our goals place us in a group of fewer than 200 companies that have set science-based targets aligned with reducing greenhouse gas emissions to keep climate change at or below 1.5°C. By committing to aggressively cut emissions at this rate, we are aligned with the most ambitious temperature goal of the Paris Agreement.

The 1.5°C scenario may sound like a small number, but even a slight temperature change has a big impact. Our connected ecosystem means a change in temperature in one part of the world can create chaos in another. With a 1°C rise in temperatures, we've already seen human and business impacts from record-breaking storms, forest fires, heat waves and floods. Without action, there will be large-scale disruption and devastation to our communities, including coastal areas that could end up underwater or land-locked cities that could see massive migration.

THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

We have an obligation and opportunity to lead in our industry. By 2060, it's projected the world will add 2.5 trillion feet of buildings*. Since the built environment is already the largest contributor to greenhouse gas emissions, this will exacerbate an already serious issue. Reports suggest building operations contribute to 28% of global carbon dioxide emissions and building materials and construction contribute 11%**. Since the built environment is part of the problem, we believe it's our responsibility to be part of the solution — and we've felt that responsibility for a long time.

Steelcase has been in business for over 100 years and has a long history of protecting the environment.

In fact, it’s been one of our core values since our founding. Over the past decade, we’ve cut our greenhouse gas emissions by over 30%. We’ve worked to remove dangerous chemicals from our processes, to reduce our water usage and to make investments in alternative energy. We plan to be in business for the next 100 years and beyond which is why we take the urgency of climate change and its projected impacts so seriously.

THE “RIPPLE EFFECT”

As we’ve worked on this key environmental issue over the years, we’ve had the benefit of seeing how one action causes another and another — a positive “ripple effect.” A growing number of organizations are also trying to reduce their carbon emissions and need our support. They need specific, detailed information about how we will meet our objectives and how our products and services can help them meet theirs. As we set our targets for additional carbon reductions in the future, we’ll share how we measure and validate our carbon footprint. We will also ask our suppliers to join us by setting their targets.

Climate change is an enormous, global issue that can only be solved by many countries and companies committing to take action. We are only one company, but as the industry leader, we have a corporate responsibility to take on global challenges and inspire others. Business can be a force for good and we hope you'll join us in making a difference.

**UN Environment, Global Status Report 2017*
***World Green Building Council, Global Status Report 2017*

Learn more about our work to make a difference by downloading our 2020 Impact Report