

## “Short Answers to Hard Questions About Climate Change” (adapted from article in NY Times - 11/28/2015)

Scientists believe most and probably all of the warming since 1950 was caused by the human release of greenhouse gases. If emissions continue unchecked, they say global warming could ultimately exceed 8 degrees Fahrenheit, which would transform the planet and undermine its capacity to support a large human population. Climate change also has the potential to cause wildlife and bird extinctions. Although the science is complicated, the following answers the question: “Is there anything I can do?”

In short, the answer is: **Fly less, Drive less, and Waste less.** You can reduce your own carbon footprint in lots of simple ways, and most of them will save you money. You can plug leaks in your home insulation to save power, install a smart thermostat, switch to more efficient light bulbs, turn off the lights in any room where it is not needed, drive fewer miles by consolidating trips or taking public transit, waste less food, and eat less meat.

Perhaps the biggest single thing individuals can do on their own is to take fewer airplane trips; just one or two fewer plane rides per year can save as much in emissions as all the other actions combined. If possible, you can also look at buying an electric or hybrid car, putting solar panels on your roof, or both.

If you want to offset your emissions, you can buy certificates, with the money going to projects that protect forests or capture greenhouse gases. Another way to reduce greenhouse gases is through California Choice Aggregations (CCA's). In California, communities are allowed to form CCA's through which they choose their own electricity supplier, with the opportunity to select a provider that uses more renewable energy sources. A number of local cities are investigating this option which may in the future be available to residents.

In the end, though, experts do not believe the needed transformation in the energy system can happen without strong state and national policies. So speaking up and exercising your rights as a citizen matters as much as anything else you can do.