



Are Dubai's Emissions Getting Lower?

The Dubai Supreme Council of Energy has announced that the emirate managed to lower its emissions by an impressive 33% in 2020. That tally was over double the targeted drop-off of 16% which the Council had earmarked for achievement by 2021 and represents a positive step forward in the race towards carbon neutrality.

Although Dubai (and the UAE) have traditionally built their economic independence and their operational infrastructure on fossil fuels, they have been [following the lead of low-emissions countries](#) in recent years in a bid to clean up their environmental profile. This has encompassed an increase in the uptake of renewable energy sources, reduced power consumption and a transition towards electric vehicles (EVs) instead of petrol or diesel ones.

Huge reductions

In 2015, Dubai signalled its intentions to the world to reduce its carbon footprint by adopting the Dubai Carbon Abatement Strategy. In it, the emirate highlighted its goal of reducing carbon emissions by 16% by 2021. However, the data published last month reveals that the authorities have smashed their own target by more than double, slashing emissions by 33% during 2020.

Increased use of renewable energy was one factor for the drop-off in emissions, with sources such as solar, wind and wave farms now comprising 11.38% of the emirate's total energy mix. Other impactful initiatives included the uptake of district cooling – responsible for an estimated 650GW/hr less of electricity consumption – and incentives aimed at encouraging the purchase and use of EVs among the Emirati populace.

On track

The efforts in attaining such a dramatic reduction in carbon emissions undoubtedly deserve praise and signify that the UAE is on track to meet its broader environmental goals. Specifically, this involves achieving complete carbon neutrality by 2050, which is no mean feat for a country that has traditionally relied heavily on the fossil fuel industry.

However, recent developments at Sustainable City in Dubai provide further cause for encouragement. In October, city officials unveiled the first net-zero carbon building in the whole world. All emissions incurred during the construction and decoration



phases are being countermanded by participation in an offsetting scheme, while the day-to-day operations of the building going forwards have been designed so as to dispense with emissions altogether.

Planning for the future

The net-zero building is a promising sign of things to come. In the same month that it was announced to the public, the Dubai Future Council on Energy also undertook a comprehensive review on how Dubai can attain net-zero status by 2050. Based upon the latest data and metadata, as well as the most advanced technological techniques and computer modelling software, the study resulted in a concrete plan of how the emirate can reach carbon neutrality.

That plan now comprises a blueprint which the authorities intend to follow over the coming 30 years. As well as an obvious focus on the energy sector, it also encompasses construction, industry, transportation and waste, as well as factoring in legal requirements, research and development demands and any other components relevant to the attainment of the objective.