

FAQs

Frequently Asked Questions -- Sustainability

Q: What is “sustainability”?

A: The dictionary says.....

sus·tain·able *adjective* \sə-'stā-nə-bəl\

- able to be used without being completely used up or destroyed
- involving methods that do not completely use up or destroy natural resources
- able to last or continue for a long time

Q: Is “sustainability” bad for business?

A: There are many people speculating that sustainability practices limit business performance. Sustainability is about wise choices that reduce waste. In the case of compressed air, the resource most wasted is energy. Countless businesses have moved significant dollars from their operating budgets to their bottom lines by investing in both improving compressed air system efficiencies and in compressed air reduction strategies.

Q: How do compressors impact carbon emissions?

A: The consumption of energy is a major contributor to atmospheric carbon. Compressed air systems use energy throughout their lifecycle:

- Energy is used in making the compressed air equipment
- Energy is used in the production, use, and disposal of consumables
- Energy is consumed by the compressed air equipment

Q: How much impact do compressors have on carbon emissions?

A: Mention utilities and energy in a discussion about manufacturing and the Big Three . . . water, electricity, natural gas . . . immediately come to mind. But compressed air is commonly accepted the Fourth Utility in manufacturing. A careful examination of the compressed air system within a facility will likely reveal several opportunities for reducing the total energy consumption, resulting in significant energy savings, lowering operating costs, and minimizing the impact on the environment through a smaller carbon footprint.

The Department of Energy estimates that compressors consume approximately 8% of US electricity, which results in approximately 214 million metric tons of carbon emissions. Further, the DOE estimates that potentially as much as half of compressed air is wasted, and even modest efforts could easily improve efficiency 20%; reducing carbon emissions equal to taking 9 million cars off the road.

Q: Is most compressed air reduction potential concentrated in the largest industrial plants?

A: No. Though larger plants generally use more energy in making compressed air, they are not wasting proportionally more than smaller plants. When you consider that smaller plants vastly outnumber the large plants, it's clear that sustainability efforts will benefit businesses across the spectrum.

CAGI is the leading organization representing manufacturers of compressed air system equipment, including air compressors, blowers, pneumatic tools, and air and drying and filtration equipment. This document is for information purposes and should not be used as a substitute for instructions from individual manufacturers. Always consult with individual manufacturers for specific instructions regarding their equipment.

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