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## *Why are we sitting here today?*

As Buddhists, we try to live in a way that promotes wellbeing and reduces harmful behavior. Our ideals are wisdom and compassion. It is our concern that human activity (especially burning fossil fuels) is resulting in a global environmental crisis that threatens the life of our dear planet Earth.

We are sitting and walking here today in mindfulness of our own greed, anger, and ignorance which contribute to inadequate social policies that hurt our environment. We hope to promote wellbeing including the preservation of our ecosystem. It is the place of our practice.

May all beings be well and free from danger  
May all beings be peaceful and at ease  
May all beings be filled with loving kindness  
May all beings be happy

### **Global Warming Fact Sheet**

Q: What causes global warming?

A: Carbon dioxide and other air pollution that is collecting in the atmosphere like a thickening blanket, trapping the sun's heat and causing the planet to warm up. Coal-burning power plants are the largest U.S. source of carbon dioxide pollution -- they produce 2.5 billion tons every year. Automobiles, the second largest source, create nearly 1.5 billion tons of CO<sub>2</sub> annually.

Here's the good news: technologies exist today to make cars that run cleaner and burn less gas, modernize power plants and generate electricity from nonpolluting sources, and cut our electricity use through energy efficiency. The challenge is to be sure these solutions are put to use.

Q: Is the earth really getting hotter?

A: Yes. Although local temperatures fluctuate naturally, over the past 50 years the average global temperature has increased at the fastest rate in recorded history. And experts think the trend is accelerating: the three hottest years on record have all occurred since 1998. Scientists say that unless we curb global warming emissions, average U.S. temperatures could be 3 to 9 degrees higher by the end of the century.

Q: Are warmer temperatures causing bad things to happen?

A: Global warming is already causing damage in many parts of the United States. Many climatologists have explained that the recent hurricane Katrina is part of a trend of increasing intensity of storms that will repeatedly threaten the U.S. In 2002, Colorado, Arizona and Oregon endured their worst wildfire seasons ever. The same year, drought created

severe dust storms in Montana, Colorado and Kansas, and floods caused hundreds of millions of dollars in damage in Texas, Montana and North Dakota. Since the early 1950s, snow accumulation has declined 60 percent and winter seasons have shortened in some areas of the Cascade Range in Oregon and Washington.

Of course, the impacts of global warming are not limited to the United States. In 2003, extreme heat waves caused more than 20,000 deaths in Europe and more than 1,500 deaths in India. And in what scientists regard as an alarming sign of events to come, the area of the Arctic's perennial polar ice cap is declining at the rate of 9 percent per decade.

Q: Is there really cause for serious concern?

A: Yes. Global warming is a complex phenomenon, and its full-scale impacts are hard to predict far in advance. But each year scientists learn more about how global warming is affecting the planet, and many agree that certain consequences are likely to occur if current trends continue. Among these:

- Melting glaciers, early snowmelt and severe droughts will cause more dramatic water shortages in the American West.
- Rising sea levels will lead to coastal flooding on the Eastern seaboard, in Florida, and in other areas, such as the Gulf of Mexico.
- Forests, farms and cities will face troublesome new pests and more mosquito-borne diseases.
- Disruption of habitats such as coral reefs and alpine meadows could drive many plant and animal species to extinction.

Q: Could global warming trigger a sudden catastrophe?

A: Recently, researchers -- and even the U.S. Defense Department -- have investigated the possibility of abrupt climate change, in which gradual global warming triggers a sudden shift in the earth's climate, causing parts of the world to dramatically heat up or cool down in the span of a few years.

In February 2004, consultants to the Pentagon released a report laying out the possible impacts of abrupt climate change on national security. In a worst-case scenario, the study concluded, global warming could make large areas of the world uninhabitable and cause massive food and water shortages, sparking widespread migrations and war.

While this prospect remains speculative, many of global warming's effects are already being observed -- and felt as in hurricane Katrina. And the idea that such extreme change is possible underscores the urgent need to start cutting global warming pollution.

Q: What country is the largest source of global warming pollution?

A: The United States. Though Americans make up just 4 percent of the world's population, we produce 25 percent of the carbon dioxide pollution from fossil-fuel burning -- by far the largest share of any country. In fact, the United States emits more carbon dioxide than China, India and Japan, combined. Clearly America ought to take a leadership role in solving the problem. And as the world's top developer of new technologies, we are well positioned to do so -- we already have the know-how.

Q: How can we cut global warming pollution?

A: It's simple: By reducing pollution from vehicles and power plants. Right away, we should put existing technologies for building cleaner cars and more modern electricity generators into widespread use. We can increase our reliance on renewable energy sources such as wind, sun and geothermal. And we can manufacture more efficient appliances and conserve energy.

**For more information: [www.nrdc.org/globalwarming/](http://www.nrdc.org/globalwarming/) or [www.stopglobalwarming.org](http://www.stopglobalwarming.org)**