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from the news desk

## GEARING UP TO REDUCE THE CO<sub>2</sub> FOOTPRINT

**It's strange how an incident which occurred many years ago still has the ability to haunt someone years later.**

I can still clearly picture my lovely diagram illustrating the greenhouse effect and global warming at a mock teaching session in my fourth year at varsity – more clear, however, was my inability to convey to my 'students' the appropriate explanation. Years later, and the problem is still a 'burning issue', with me still grappling with 'climate change' or, in this instance, better understanding it and actively doing something about reducing my carbon footprint.

May/June's 'water and energy topics' have certainly brought home how passionate individuals and companies are in their drive to reduce their carbon footprint.

Cement producer Afrisam's fervour to reduce its CO<sub>2</sub> footprint has seen the company launching Eco Building Cement – the most environment-friendly cement available in the country.

Speaking at the launch was our favourite weatherman – Simon Gear – who asked: "So what does the globe being half a degree warmer mean for South Africa?" It doesn't make it all that much hotter; however, the changes are more subtle.

While we were expecting the past summer to be a relatively 'dry' one, it has been one of the wettest. Climate change leads to the cycles of wet and dry spells lasting much longer – the Eastern and Western Cape regions will endure longer periods of warmer and drier cycles, Gear reports.

Alien plant invasion will increase, given that they flourish in CO<sub>2</sub>-rich

environments, leading to indigenous plants struggling to survive.

While the deaths attributed to terrorism amount to 2000 per year, climate change-related deaths amount to 2000 per fortnight (WHO statistics for 2000).

Although we may regard South Africa as being 'green' what with our large tracts of 'green fields', our primary electricity source – coal – maintains our position as one of the leading polluters in the world.

At the moment North America and Australia are the top polluters, emitting the highest levels of CO<sub>2</sub> per capita into the atmosphere.

Aside from Afrisam, construction contractor Basil Read is certainly passionate about 'energy efficiency, reducing its carbon footprint and increasing sustainability'. Earlier this month the company launched the solar energy system at its head office in Lillanton, Boksburg – the first in a series of steps being undertaken to reduce the company's carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) footprint. CE Marius Heyns is certainly passionate about reducing his energy footprint, both on an individual basis as well as on a local level.

In fact, he has already adopted solar energy at his home and has purchased a solar-powered vehicle!

As for me, I'm certainly trying to make a difference – the first step is reading Simon Gear's book – *Going Green: 365 ways to change our world* – one small step at a time!

PS. It still baffles me – despite all the global warming evidence and visible effects, there remains a healthy portion of non-believers. ■