Team Topic: Environmental and Climate Change

Team Chapter: Chicago Chapter

Team Lead:

Rick Page, MCR, CCIM SVP, US Bank (former), Chapter Past President

Team Members:

Lauren Bagull, Allsteel |Gunlocke, Chapter President
Emma Cox, LEED GA, WELL AP McDonald's, Corporate Sustainability
Brett Gardner, IA Interior Architects, Associate, Project Director
Gary Graham, Cushman & Wakefield, Director, Energy Mgmt.
Roy Green, HNI Corp., Corp. Social Responsibility Manager
Susan Heinking, AIA, NCARB, LEED Fellow, Pepper Construction, VP High Performance
Kurt Karnatz, President, Environmental Systems Design (ESD)
Laurel Kruke, LEED AP ID+C, Program Manager, Illinois Green Alliance
Saagar Patel, PE, LEED AP BD+C, CCP, Studio Leader, Energy + Ecology Mechanical Eng., ESD
Tony Smaniotto, MCR, Pepper Construction, Chapter Past President
Mark Stenftenagel, CEO, Whitney Architecture
Jason Streepy, Allstate Insurance, Real Estate Manager
Emmy Swift, Allstate Insurance, Sr. Consultant, Corporate Sustainability
Tim Zelazny, RA, LEED AP, WELL AP, CPHC, BECxP, Sr. Envelope & Healthy Building Engineer

How will re-entry into the post-COVID workplace affect the environment and companies' environmental commitments, and what are our recommendations for the corporate real estate (CRE) executive to stay on course?

To answer those questions, we assembled a team of experts in LEED, HVAC, Energy, A/C/E and CRE. Then we identified four focus areas that, upon returning to the workplace, *may impact corporate environmental and sustainability commitments. They are:*

- Ventilation and Refrigeration
- Energy
- Waste
- Supply Chain

Many priorities will compete for attention during this time of crisis and beyond. This paper is intended to provide useful guidance to the CRE executive in this important area, by providing both immediate and strategic action planning recommendations.

Ventilation and Refrigeration

Occupants, concerned about airborne virus transmission, will want to know what the building owner/operator or facilities manager (or both) can and will do to improve Indoor Air Quality (IAQ).

Improving IAQ, through increased intake of outside air, will be an energy-intensive process. Utilizing increased heat and refrigeration results in Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions.

Immediate recommendations:

- Review current HVAC system maintenance practices (filter cleaning and replacement) or consider higher MERV filtration to capture smaller particulate matter (to which viruses attach**).**
- Provide transparency to employees, describing IAQ tests, maintenance practices, enhancements and/or assessment activities conducted, and actions taken.
- Require building maintenance to utilize an industry-standard tool such as the EPA's I-BEAM, or hire a qualified engineering firm to conduct an assessment and evaluation of HVAC and identify measures to improve IAQ.
- Review utility company programs that offer free building audits/assessments of energy efficiency and recommend improvements, that often include incentives (Ways to Save For Your Business).
- Replace high GHG generating refrigerants (a top-five contributor to climate change) with low-Hydrofluorocarbons (HFC) or alternatives. Investors like BlackRock increasingly screen their portfolios for GHG reduction. This initiative would boost a building's Global Real Estate Sustainability Benchmark (GRESB) ratings and value.

Strategic Recommendations:

- Implement measures as identified in I-BEAM, utility company audits, or other approaches to improve efficiency and reduce energy consumption. This may involve modification to maintenance protocols, system enhancements, or both. Share with employees.

- Implementing Smart Building technology such as IAQ and occupancy sensors, integrated controls, and energy efficiency measures.

- Consider innovative technologies such as Ultra-Violet (UV) treatment to destroy biological pathogens. Currently effective for disinfecting fluids and surfaces, and inactivating microorganisms, UV is proven to eliminate microbial growth on cooling coils and surfaces of AHUs/RTUs. However, the medium to be disinfected must be moving slowly or be at a complete steady state. If air is moving greater than 250 fpm, UV may not be effective.

- When considering a new lease/building selection or building design, request conditions that provide above average IAQ (ASHRAE 62.1 standard, operable windows, etc.).

- When evaluating a new lease/building selection or design of a new building, utilize Green Lease provisions and specify energy efficiency (i.e. a high-achieving LEED or Energy Star Certified) and/or develop specific Owners Project Requirements (OPR) exceeding code-minimum standards.

- Specify refrigerants with low-Hydrofluorocarbons (HFC) or HFC alternatives. This initiative would boost a building's GRESB rating.

- Consider the integration of on-site or purchased renewable or efficient energy (solar, wind, geothermal, other) to offset any increased COVID-related energy costs and GHG.

Energy

In the post-COVID environment there will be increased focus on improving IAQ and associated HVAC and filter systems.

Approximately 73% of the total GHG emissions worldwide are due to energy consumption in the built environment. Building HVAC systems represent over 33% of the total energy consumed by buildings. Increasing the ventilation above minimum values will promote IAQ by actively reducing the concentration of particles and pathogens in the air. However, this will also increase the energy associated with fan power to move this additional air and the requirements of conditioning the air to meet the thermal comfort needs.

Equipment runtimes and energy needs will increase to boost the air changes in the building, perhaps running 24/7 to ensure appropriate air changes and accommodating new employee work patterns.

Immediate Recommendations:

- Investigate improved filtering. Higher rated filters capture smaller particles, however additional fan power is required to move the air through the filters. In some cases, fans cannot handle the increased resistance. There will be situations where insufficient filter bank clearances prevent higher rated filters.

- Assess investment in air cleaning devices like HEPA filtration, air scrubbers, and/or ionization technologies. These technologies can remove viruses from the air. Careful consideration must be made to ensure correct installation, effectiveness in reducing pathogens, managing energy consumption and minimizing impact on employees.

Strategic Recommendations:

- Invest in air quality sensors, software, and technologies that provide data on how buildings systems are managing the particles in the air.
- Consider technologies like Energy Management Information Systems (EMIS) and Fault Detection Diagnostics Systems (FDD) tools that process thousands of building data points that identify opportunities to improve operations and produce actionable insights to automate and optimize building operations, thus decreasing energy use.
- Incorporate "Green Lease" provisions in future leases.

Supply Chain

The pandemic has exposed resiliency issues and product shortages. Significant changes in your supply chain are likely. Managing the environmental impact will be vital.

Amid Covid-19, large financial investors such as BlackRock have recommitted to their climate commitments with greater emphasis on environmental, social and governance (ESG) reporting, and supply chain.

Presently, between 70%-80% of a company's carbon footprint resides in their supply chain. Per *Architecture 2030*, materials used in constructing a building will account for 74% of a facility's CO2 emissions over its lifespan. *See Figure 1 below.*

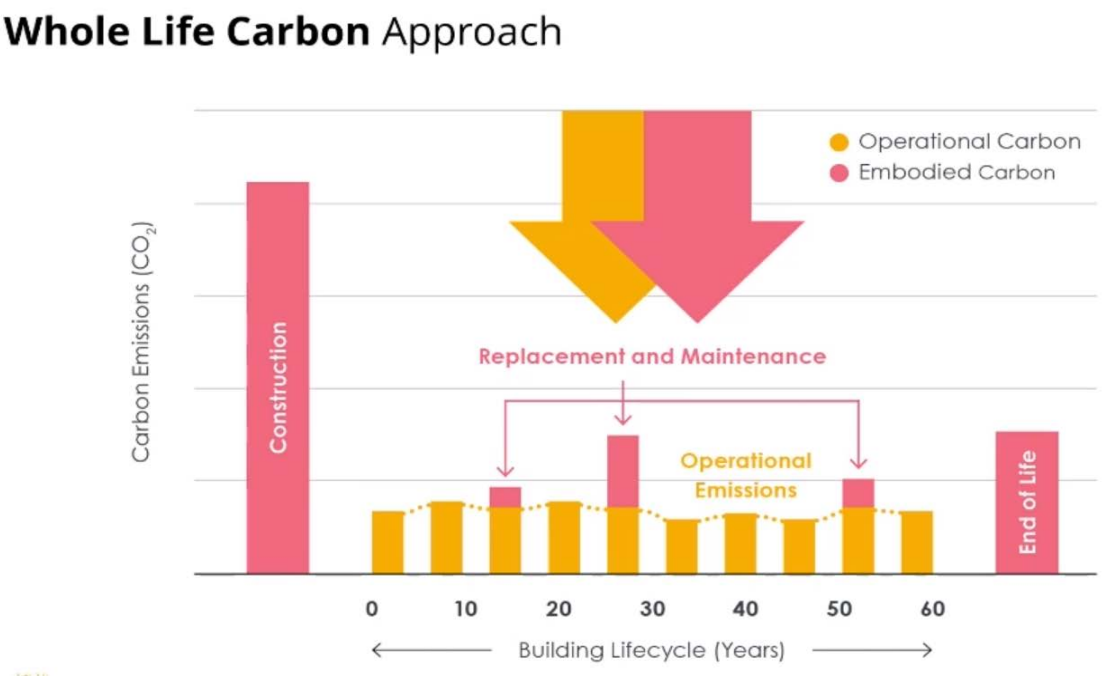

Figure 1 – Building Lifecycle Embodied Carbon. Source: Elementa Consulting.

Immediate recommendations:

- Request that vendors disclose materials, ingredients and environmental attributes of products procured for creating social distancing or temporary barriers.

- Ask for a Health Product Declarations (HPDs) or Declare labels and Environmental Product Declarations (EPDs) for these materials. If those are not available, ask for the basic material ingredient list and Globally Harmonized System of Classification (GHS) Safety Data Sheets. Understanding what is in these products will help guide end-of-life decisions and lessen the impact of material choices.

- Include local vendors in post COVID-19 supply chain resiliency plans. Doing so minimizes your Scope 3 carbon emissions and enhances your supply chain resiliency.

Strategic actions (climate commitments):

- To minimize supplier environmental risk of future global crises, implement supplier assessments with an emphasis on Corporate Social Responsibility practices including origin of your supplier's source materials, and the environmental, human, and social practices of those vendors.

- Increase awareness of new targeting models, such as SBTi, requiring companies to disclose their Scope 3 emissions, which includes purchased goods and services. *See Figure 2 below:*

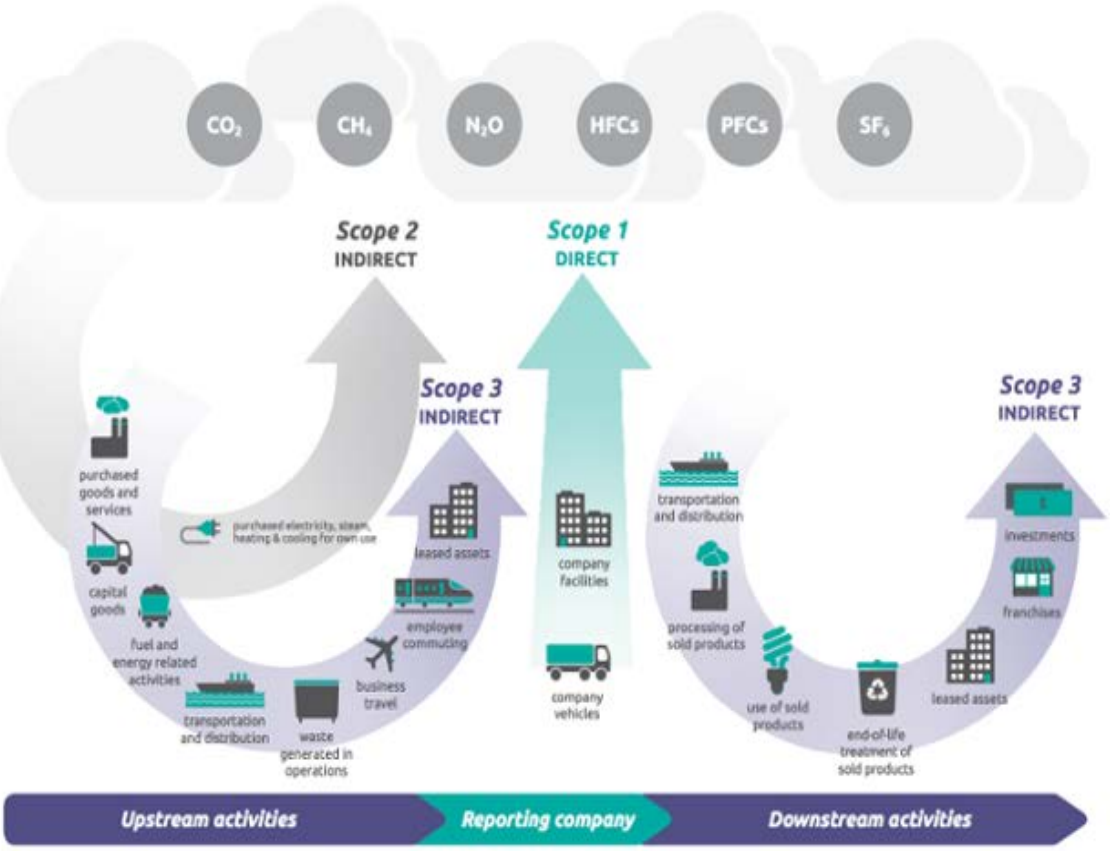

Figure 2 – The Green House Gas (GHG) Protocol Reference Chart. Source: [Green House Gas Protocol]

- Utilize programs like the Global Supply Chain Report (Carbon Disclosure Project) that help map supplier footprints and encourage accountability across the supply chain.

Strategic recommendations (GHG):

- As mechanical systems are upgraded post-COVID to allow more flexibility with ventilation and/or filtration, select equipment that:

  1. Is efficient (reduced operational carbon).
  2. Contains low Global Warming Potential (GWP) refrigerant (reduce GHG).
  3. Can be modified or upgraded on-site in the future (waste less).
  4. Has product specific Environmental Product Disclosure (EPD) (reduce embodied carbon).
  5. Is sourced locally (reduce embodied carbon).

- Invest in new technology in MEP purchases. They account for up to 70% (retrofit) or 50% (new construction) of CO2 emissions from embodied carbon. *See Figure 3 below.*

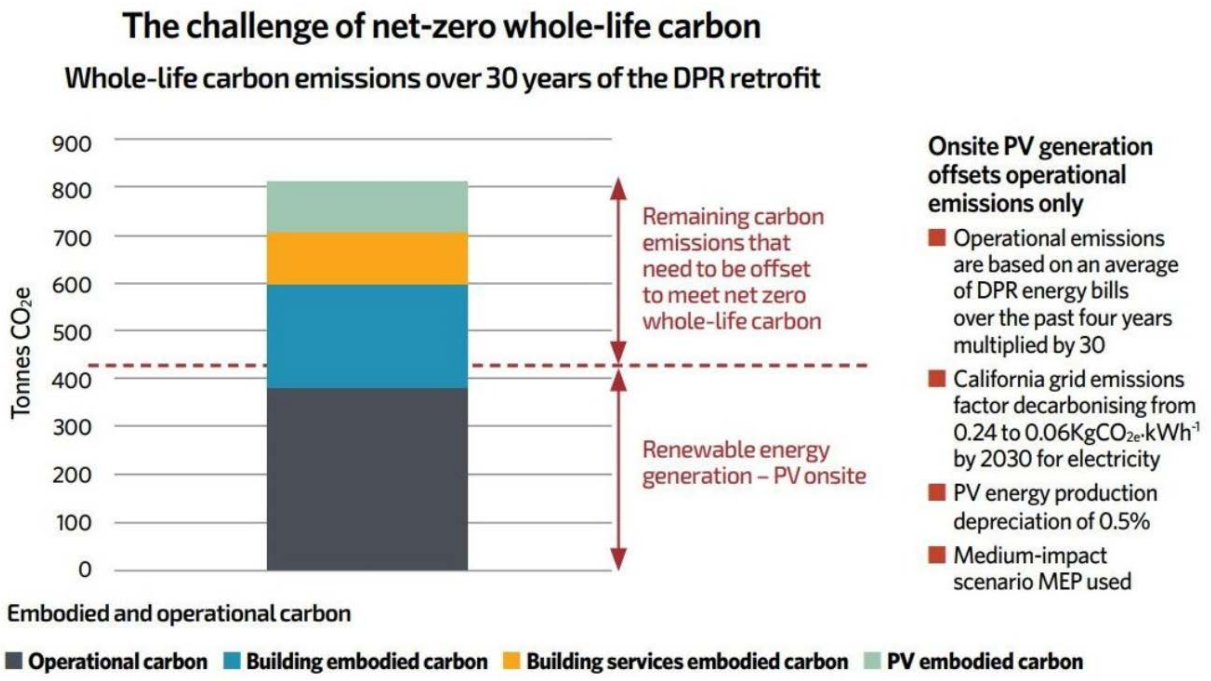

Figure 3 – Embodied Carbon of Building Services (MEP). Source: CIBSE

Waste

In a post COVID-19 world, there will be an abundance of caution and frequent cleaning and disinfecting. There will be a push toward more cleanable materials on high touch surfaces.

Workspaces will likely be reconfigured to accommodate social distancing, space flexibility, and additional barriers. These changes will likely increase the amount of waste generated.

Immediate recommendations:

- Provide training on proper CDC protocols to minimize unnecessary regulated medical waste.
- Consider using *WaterSense*-labelled washing machines and *Energy Star* dryers for laundering microfiber cloths versus using disposables.
- Institute bulk purchasing policies to minimize packaging and maximize loads.
- Negotiate returnable packaging programs with vendors. Disinfectant protocols on returnable packaging can minimize concerns.
- Disinfect durable assets like furniture prior to reassigning, repurposing, or donation.
- Centralize waste and recycling bins for fewer collection and sanitation points.

- Choose materials for temporary barriers that are cleanable, re-usable or recyclable like polyethylene plastic. Avoid disposable materials or non-recyclable materials like vinyl. *See Figure 4.*

Figure 4 – Recycling Extra Waste? Temporary corrugated barriers in a cafeteria in China – March

Strategic recommendations:

- Develop cleaning and disinfecting protocols that meet the CDC requirements and use ingredients known to be less harmful to health and protect furniture and other durable assets, preventing premature disposal.
- Build spaces with adaptable options like demountable walls and partitions that facilitate social distancing now and enable reconfiguration as needs change.

Conclusion:

Environmental risks and opportunities will exist in the post-COVID- 19 world. CRE leadership must make a difference and innovate. Embracing the strategic recommendations made herein is a good start.