



Office of Mayor Tom Potter
City of Portland

August 7, 2005

Governor Ted Kulongoski
160 State Capitol
900 Court Street
Salem, Oregon 97301-4047

Dear Governor Kulongoski,

It has come to my attention that a new insulation plant being built by Owens Corning in Gresham will emit greenhouse gases equal to approximately 100,000 additional cars or a major new coal-burning power plant. While I want to congratulate Mayor Becker and the state for attracting new business and much-needed jobs to our region, I am concerned that this facility will be contributing to a global trend that affects every Portlander and Oregonian. I am writing to express my concerns about this project and my support for your continued leadership on both environmental issues and economic growth in our state.

Oregon, and the Portland region in particular, have a well-deserved reputation for being “green.” This reputation comes from decades of intentional public policy decisions, vigilant citizen activism, and thousands of individual choices by residents and businesses to pursue greener, cleaner lifestyles and methods of production that have lower impacts on our environment.

Recently, Portland and Multnomah County have announced the success so far with our local Action Plan on Global Warming: bringing area CO2 emissions back down to very near 1990 levels, a key benchmark of the Kyoto Protocol. While we are excited about our progress, achieving our local goal of reducing emissions to 10% below the 1990 level by 2010 remains a significant challenge. It will take concerted efforts to not only do more of these “small” lifestyle-related actions, but also to keep a close eye on what additional emissions are coming online with new industry.

I commend you for your leadership in creating a statewide initiative on global warming, and joining with California and Washington in a concerted effort. Your initiative sets forward a goal of arresting growth of greenhouse gas emissions by 2010, and by 2020, achieving a 10% reduction below 1990 levels statewide. Portland is happy to support this initiative and help build other partners across the state.

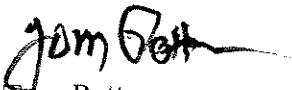
Our accomplishments to date have recently propelled our region to the forefront of the international dialogue about global warming. We have proven that not only can emissions trends be halted and reversed, but that we can do it at the same time we grow the economy. Our region and state also stand ready to reap even more economic benefits from our reputation—both by attracting the kinds of businesses that want to locate and expand in a green Oregon, and from local firms that are at the cutting edge of exportable green technologies and products. These unique advantages can position us well, if we continue to promote them and raise the bar.

The situation at hand with Owens Corning presents a ripe opportunity for discussion about how DEQ can be better empowered to regulate, monitor, and ensure public transparency for emissions permits. DEQ is a vital partner if we are truly serious about meeting our goals to address global warming. I am aware that although Owens Corning is within legal limits for emissions, DEQ does have some discretion in regulating air emissions to minimize environmental impacts. I urge you to ensure DEQ does this. Many citizens and advocacy groups have also raised concerns about the permitting process and documents about potential emissions, and I hope you will work with them to ensure a full and fair process. I will also submit comments directly to DEQ, and will send you a copy of those.

This is also a great opportunity to explore avenues for green development in what is otherwise a polluting industry. With such a short timeline before this particular greenhouse gas (HCFC-142b) is due to be phased out nationally, I applaud the pledge of Owens Corning to convert to a greener technology by 2010. Let's challenge the company to use innovative clean technology up front, rather than looking at how to convert to it in less than five years. If we are serious about encouraging green economic development and investing in cleaner technologies, why would we not do that now? If the technology is available, and the state is employing incentives for this facility to locate here, let's use this as an example of a new way of industrial development that both the state and the company can promote.

Again, I would like to express my support for your leadership and my hope that you will do everything possible to encourage the kind of progress Oregonians want—a growing economy that doesn't unnecessarily add to the costs of global warming down the line. I know the Portland Office of Sustainable Development is ready and willing to create a stronger partnership with your office and other state partners to expand and share best practices, create more incentives for green development, and market our state's reputation for our economic advantage. If my office can assist in linking these efforts, please let me know.

Sincerely,



Tom Potter
Mayor of Portland

TP: sc

Cc: Mayor Chuck Becker, Gresham
Mark Riskedahl, Executive Director, Northwest Environmental Defense Center
Jane Harris, Oregon Center for Environmental Health
Susan Anderson, Portland Office of Sustainable Development
Speaker Karen Minnis, Oregon House of Representatives
Senator Kate Brown, Oregon State Senate
Chair Diane Linn, Multnomah County Board of Commissioners
Maria Rojo de Steffey, Multnomah County Commissioner
Stephanie Hallock, DEQ Director
Congressman Earl Blumenauer
Metro President David Bragdon
David Van't Hof, Governor's Sustainability Advisor
Sharon Genasci, Northwest District Association