



Environmental Policy

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This Policy sets out the governance process, rules and guidelines for all personnel regarding approaches to environmental sustainability at CRCS.

Policy Owner	Chief Executive Officer
Policy Lead	Vice President, Finance
Endorsed by	CRC Board of Directors
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1. Policy Summary and Statement

Introduction

Climate change threatens all people, places, animal, and plant species. Climate change can be a contributor to conflict situations, cause and increase the intensity and severity of natural disasters and extreme weather events, loss of life, livelihood, displacement, exploitation, chronic hunger, and food insecurity. The Canadian Red Cross Society (CRCS) recognizes that humanitarian crises are continuing to worsen with the impacts of climate change and impact those in vulnerable situations disproportionately.

As an organization that responds to climate related disasters and advocates for stronger adaptation, mitigation, and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reduction action from levels of government, the CRCS has an obligation to address climate change and environmental sustainability through targeted organization-wide adaptation, mitigation, and emissions reduction measures.

Policy Statement

The Canadian Red Cross Society (CRCS) recognizes that climate change and environmental degradation is a humanitarian crisis. As an organization that is focused on all hazard emergency preparedness, risk reduction, response and recovery in Canada and abroad, we know the importance of addressing climate change and acknowledge that we must strengthen our approach to mitigation, adaptation and emissions reduction measures. Guided by our Fundamental Principles – humanity, impartiality, neutrality, independence, voluntary service, unity and universality – the Canadian Red Cross Society commits to adapting our programs and operations to minimize our impact on the environment by:

- **Embedding** environmental sustainability considerations in all domestic and international programming, including service lines and support services;
- **Factoring** the cost of carbon into all major procurement decisions;
- **Purchasing** environmentally responsible products based on such criteria as: vendor alignment to recognized environmental standards, product durability, use of recycled or re-furnished materials, reduced energy and water consumption, ability to be recycled, refilled or re-furnished at the end of its useful life, and toxicity;
- **Reducing** our carbon footprint through such actions as energy efficiency upgrades and reducing waste;



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- **Training and educating** all personnel, including volunteers and paid staff, about environmental issues that may affect their work, and identify ways in which personnel can reduce their impact on the environment;
- **Collaborating with Indigenous communities** to incorporate Indigenous knowledge systems on the environment into CRCS programs;
- **Ensuring accountability to environmental commitments** made to external partners, international agreements, and ongoing policy alignments to rights-based frameworks;
- **Continuing** to improve on our environmental performance through regular environmental policy review, activity tracking and reporting; and
- **Dedicating resources** for environmentally sustainable commitments and activities.

This Environmental Policy supports a framework that maintains a culture of continuous improvement and meets the expectations of the people with whom the CRCS' engages.

2. Purpose and Scope

- 2.1. The policy sets out CRCS's commitment to respond to climate change, reduce our environmental footprint and increase environmental sustainability. This is in line with the broader Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement commitment to address climate change in humanitarian work and in internal operations as outlined in documents such as the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies' [Strategy 2030](#) and the [Climate and Environmental Charter for Humanitarian Organizations](#). The policy is aligned with our commitments under the *Climate and Environment Charter for Humanitarian Organizations* and is guided by international objectives and standards under the [Paris Agreement](#), [Sendai Framework](#), [Sustainable Development Goals](#). The CRCS will continue to work with and learn from Movement partners, partner National Societies, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies' Green Working Response Group, sector partners, donors, and the people we serve.
- 2.2. The purpose of the policy is to ensure that the CRCS addresses and meets its environmental commitments through a 'do-no-harm' approach, establish goals and objectives to ensure accountability, and formally create mechanisms to continuously improve approaches and responses to climate change.



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- 2.3. The policy aims to align environmental priorities and efforts across CRCS domestic and international operations through a whole-of-Society approach.
- 2.4. The policy adheres to the Movement's Fundamental Principles and is in line with the [IFRC Strategy 2030](#) aim to "reduce our own climate and environmental footprint."
- 2.5. The scope of the policy applies to all CRCS personnel and business operations, including any and all relevant policies and procedures.

3. Definitions

- 3.1. **Ally Organization** – the CRCS is an organization that promotes equity within the organization and in operations.
- 3.2. **Carbon Emissions Offset** – a reduction in greenhouse gases in one area that offsets the emissions that are made elsewhere.
- 3.3. **CRCS Personnel** – paid staff and volunteers as part of the CRSC that operate in Canada and internationally.
- 3.4. **'Do-No-Harm' Principle** – the principle under which humanitarians and their interventions must do all they reasonably can to mitigate or eliminate the risks of negatively impacting the people they serve.
- 3.5. **Environment** - the physical, chemical, and biotic elements that surround a person or community.¹
- 3.6. **Environmental Protection** - any activity to maintain or restore the quality of the environment through preventing the emission of pollutants or reducing the presence of polluting substances in environment.²
- 3.7. **Environmental Impact** – the effect of activities that people, businesses, organizations and other entities have on the environment.
- 3.8. **Greenhouse Gas** - gases that trap heat in the Earth's atmosphere, causing increased warming. Types of greenhouse gases include carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide,

¹ <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/environment>

² <https://stats.oecd.org/glossary/detail.asp?ID=836>



and industrial gases (hydrofluorocarbons, perfluorocarbons, sulfur hexafluoride, and nitrogen trifluoride).

- 3.9. **Indigenous knowledge** - reflects the unique cultures, languages, governance systems and histories of Indigenous peoples. Indigenous knowledge is dynamic and evolves over time.³
- 3.10. **Sustainable** - meets the needs of a present issue without negatively impacting future generations.⁴

4. Guiding Principles

- 4.1. The CRCS will act in a manner that reduces environmental impact in domestic and international operations so long as efforts do not interfere with its humanitarian imperative, which is the main priority of the organization and the Movement.
- 4.2. The CRCS commits to implement measures and make decisions that will minimize its impact on the environment, and to prevent adverse impacts on the environment wherever possible.
- 4.3. All sustainability efforts will align with or seek to exceed relevant domestic and global standards.
- 4.4. The CRCS procurement will factor in sustainable, cost-effective materials and solutions. This includes materials that reduce waste, are low carbon, made with recycled material, and biodegradable materials.
- 4.5. The CRCS facilities, including office space and warehouses, will uphold sustainable practices such as conservation of energy, waste reduction, use of recyclable materials.
- 4.6. Transportation solutions will be reviewed and optimized to lower emissions and transition to sustainable alternatives that include electric vehicle fleets.
- 4.7. The CRCS will embed best practices on environmental sustainability into long-term planning and operations.
- 4.8. In the context of environmental protection, the CRCS understands that Indigenous nations and communities are the rightful stewards of their ancestral land and traditional

³ <https://www.canada.ca/en/impact-assessment-agency/programs/aboriginal-consultation-federal-environmental-assessment/indigenous-knowledge-policy-framework-initiative/indigenous-knowledge.html>

⁴ https://www.worldof7billion.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Sustainable_Solution_Organzier.pdf



territory and bring unique knowledge and insights that can help guide the CRCS in achieving its environmental commitments. The CRCS will include Indigenous knowledge and guidance in its environmental efforts where applicable and relevant.

- 4.9. As an ally organization we are committed to the principle of 'do-no-harm' and will ensure that this principle is embedded in all environmental approaches.

5. Monitoring and Accountability

- 5.1. The **Chief Executive Officer (CEO)** of the CRCS is the policy owner and is accountable to the Board for ensuring this policy is enacted, and responsible for ensuring sufficient attention and resource is available to implement it; and to seek assurance that it is being complied with.
- 5.2. The **Governance Committee** will have policy oversight given the prominence of the environment as one of our Environment, Social and Governance (ESG) pillars.
- 5.3. The **Audit and Finance Committee** is the subcommittee of the Board that will seek assurance that the policy is fit for purpose, implemented and complied with. Within its terms of reference the committee can investigate concerns of non-compliance.
- 5.4. The **Vice President, Finance** is responsible for oversight of the environmental initiatives and programs designed to comply with this policy and to ensure that CRCS business operations are appropriately implementing the policy. The Vice President is also responsible for creating an appropriate internal staffing structure to support the effective implementation and ongoing operation of the environmental performance program.
- 5.5. The **Vice President, Finance** is responsible for reporting to the Governance and Audit and Finance Committee with respect to the implementation of the policy as well as ongoing activities related to the policy.
- 5.6. The **Senior Leadership** of the CRCS are responsible for implementation of the policy and ensuring adequate structures and resources are in place to meet the requirements of this policy and related procedures.

6. Implementation Measures

- 6.1. **Baseline** - The CRCS will use 2019 as the performance measurement baseline year.



6.2. **Targets** – The CRCS commits to reducing its operational GHG emissions⁵ as follows:

6.2.1. 20% from the baseline year by 2025

6.2.2. 50% from the baseline year by 2030

6.2.3. Net Zero by 2050.

6.3. **Business Travel** – The CRCS personnel will predominantly engage in non-essential work and conferences through virtual and remote connection where available. This will contribute to a reduction of air and land travel, which is a major GHG emitter for the CRCS. Business travel should only occur when it is determined to be essential and if remote connection is not an available option.

Low emissions travel options, such as rail, will be used in preference over air and gas and diesel-powered vehicles when domestic travel is required and where it makes sense, such as short-haul travel. The exceptions to this would be where an emergency response requires the fastest mode of transport and for individuals that have accessibility or health considerations that need to be considered.

6.4. **Vehicle Use and Procurement** – The CRCS will assess new vehicle procurement with the aim to replace the fleet with hybrid or electric vehicle models. The assessment will include provision and availability of charging stations and related infrastructure.

This policy does not apply to vehicles procured for international response preparedness.

6.5. **Infrastructure and Maintenance** – CRCS-owned and leased offices and warehouses will reduce energy consumption through various measures including but not limited to window upgrades, HVAC upgrades, installation of energy efficient appliances and lighting. The CRCS will review approaches to building ownership and leases to ensure that properties meet energy efficient standards.

The CRCS will review its current real estate portfolio to determine the feasibility to divest in real estate as CRCS makes changes to reduce office space, which is in line with the organization's move to hybrid work solutions.

6.6. **Recycling and Waste Management** – The CRCS will maximize waste reduction through the principles of reduce, reuse, recycle and resource recovery.

⁵ The CRC's sources of GHG were assessed against the requirements of the GHG Protocol to determine their inclusion in the CRC core operational carbon footprint. This includes all of CRC's Scope 1 and Scope 2 emissions from domestic facilities and fleet and certain scope 3 categories (business travel, paper consumed) deemed essential for CRCs operations and for which accurate data exists.



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Information technology and other electrical equipment will be recycled, reused, or otherwise responsibly disposed of in accordance with provincial e-waste standards and programs.

- 6.7. **Philanthropy** – The CRCS will review approaches to fundraising to reduce waste and adopt the use of sustainable materials and approaches.
- 6.8. **Procurement and Supply Chain Management** – The CRCS will reduce GHG emissions through efficiency improvements in warehousing and transport management, and waste reduction in its material handling and packaging activities.

The CRCS will use, where practical, sustainable materials sourced from sustainable means in international and domestic operations. Suppliers contracted by the CRCS will be selected through a procurement process that assesses their environmental posture, including environmental certifications and internal environmental policies.

Wherever possible, supplies used for day-to-day office operations will be sourced from sustainable materials and include but are not limited to the purchase of supplies made from recycled materials. Where possible and where it makes sense, equipment will be procured from repurposed or reused sources.

The CRCS will commit to the phasing out of single use plastics and other single use materials such as straws, non-recyclable coffee cups and pods, and plastic water bottles

- 6.9. **CRCS Shop and Merchandise** – The CRCS will phase out products that are single-use plastic and products that are unable to be recycled except where there are no other alternatives.

Products that are not suitable for resale will be donated or recycled and only considered to be waste as a last resort.

- 6.10. **Communications and Awareness** – Onboarding for new personnel will include information on climate change and environmental sustainability, how it affects our work, and actions the CRCS can take to reduce its environmental impact. The CRCS personnel will receive regular updates on environmental progress and behavioral guidance, and will have access to current climate change and environmental sustainability material.

CRCS personnel working within, or alongside Indigenous communities will have access to educational resources and support from expertise in Indigenous Relations on environmental worldviews and cultural safety tools to support CRCS personnel engagements with Indigenous peoples. Materials and training will be provided by Learning and Development as needed to accommodate learning environments (virtual sessions, online resources and in-person).



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- 6.11. **Reporting** – Environmental performance reporting will be performed quarterly by a resource identified by the VP Finance. Reports will be reviewed by the VP Finance, and distributed to Senior Leadership for awareness and comment. Final reports will be translated and posted on SharePoint for internal staff awareness.

The CRCS will include within its Annual Report a section specific to its progress on GHG reduction targets and efforts to further integrate environmental considerations into its business operations.

- 6.12. **Carbon Emissions Offsets** – The CRCS may off-set carbon emissions where reductions are not possible due to emergency response operations and/or when alternative methods to reduce our carbon footprint are not available and feasible.

Purchasing carbon offsets is an acceptable option to close emission reduction target gaps but should not be relied upon as the only method.

- 6.13. **Indigenous Lens** – Application of an Indigenous lens on the environment is informed by meaningful engagement and strengthening our relationship with First Nations, Metis and Inuit, and working in collaboration with the CRCS Office of Indigenous Relations and the CRCS Indigenous Peoples Framework.

CRCS services provided to Indigenous communities are continuously aligned with the accountability and governance as reflected in Appendix I and related frameworks to ensure that we prioritize a community-led approach to supporting Indigenous peoples across Canada and within the CRCS.

7. Review and Maintenance

This policy was originally issued in **December 2022**. This policy is next due for review in **January 2027**.

8. APPENDICES

- > Appendix 1: Related CRCS Policies
- > Appendix 2: Guiding and Reference Resources

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Appendix 1: Related CRCS Policies

Related Policies
Domestic Travel & Expense Standard Guidelines
International Delegate Travel Expense Procedure
Procurement Policy and Procedures Manual

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Appendix 2: Guiding and Reference Resources

Resource List (Evergreen)
Indigenous Peoples Framework, 2017
Come Heat or High Water Report, 2020
United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction
IPCC Sixth Assessment Report – Mitigation of Climate Change
2021 CRC Inclusive Resiliency Project Indigenous Report: “A Two Eyed Seeing Framework: Looking to Indigenous Approaches to Protection in Order to Create a Braided Approach to Disaster Risk Reduction for the Canadian Red Cross”
IPCC Sixth Assessment Report – Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability
Sustainable Development Goals
ICRC Ambitions to Address the Climate Crisis
The Climate and Environmental Charter for Humanitarian Organizations
The Paris Agreement