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Charter a jet, plant a tree

Since their inception, business charter jets often have been described as taxis for the rich and famous. And as the world takes a closer look at the melting polar ice cap and carbon footprints, the industry has become a target for environmental pundits and the less affluent.

Environmentalists claim per-passenger carbon emissions from smaller private jets are much greater than in the commercial industry.

Officials from the Air Transportation Association of America, a coalition of commercial airline companies, criticize the private charter jet industry for the same reasons.

"The fact is that while they use less fuel, they are far more emission inefficient," said John Meenan, executive vice president of the ATA.

"The fact is they are a big percentage of traffic and they are going to get bigger."

But that is changing as new engines and a carbon offset program hit the air. [Jets.com](#), one of the nation's largest online charter jet service, recently launched the Carbon Neutral Flights Program, allowing customers to offset their carbon footprint.

Based in Quincy, Mass., with operations in Phoenix, [Jets.com](#) partnered with [CarbonFund.org](#) allowing passengers to determine a trip's carbon emissions and pay an additional amount to [Carbonfund.org](#) for reforestation programs in the United States.

"This was something our customers wanted," said Nate McKelvey, [Jets.com](#) chief executive. "We expect this to be very popular in the near future."

The two companies used data from the World Resources Institute to determine the exact amount of carbon emissions for the jets flown in the [Jets.com](#) network. The offset is tax deductible.

This is not the only way the private jet industry is working to reduce carbon emissions. As charter companies add new models to their fleets, they are finding manufacturers producing more efficient jets, said Steve Prieser, chief financial officer of Cutter Aviation Inc. in Phoenix.

He said he understands complaints from environmentalist groups, but added fuel prices have forced the industry to look at more efficient engines.

"With jet fuel at more than \$5 a gallon, and these planes burning 100 gallons an hour, something had to be done," he said. "These planes coming out are easily 30 percent more efficient than the older jets."

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