



Good News for the Environment from 2019 – Wait, What?

The first in a series of four parts to encourage those feeling eco-depressed.

No, as Greta and so many youth climate leaders have shared [UN speech], incrementalism will not suffice. Making recent shifts visible allows us to, surprisingly, breathe a big (justified) sigh of relief, even in the face of prevailing smog and the mountainous level of change we need. Here at Stephen Turner Inc. we work on the forefront of sustainability in buildings – locally on net zero school and other leading edge projects and at the state, national and global level on codes and standards for environmentally responsible building design. From this perspective, here's the first of several examples (more soon!) where hope can be drawn from 2019:

Part 1: Stratospheric Ozone

Remember all the ozone talk of the 1990s? Guess what-- this is one of those "no news is good news" situations. The ozone "hole" in the earth's stratosphere was at its smallest recorded size this September and October. For the third time in 40 years of monitoring stratospheric ozone, unusual weather helped limit the seasonal hole to half its typical size this year. More good stratospheric ozone news – the Montreal Protocol has been so successfully implemented by many countries, notably Iceland, Norway, and Canada, that their use of ozone depleting chemicals is nearly vanishing. In the late 1980's, tracked anthropogenic releases of ozone depleting substances were many times the non-human baseline of natural releases. After decades of worldwide cooperative efforts, anthropogenic contributions have been reduced over 98%.

Refresher: Ozone can be a confusing issue because ozone in the lower atmosphere where we breathe is bad, but the unrelated stratospheric ozone layer is good – in fact it is essential for all plant and animal life on the planet. More at <https://www.esrl.noaa.gov/csd/assessments/>

Action: Yes, severe atmospheric damage has already been done, and past damage will persist far into the future. And also, my choices now and in the future have impact - I do in fact have the power to help solve this global problem. I'm confronting my ownership of the refrigerants in my own home and business's building and car air-conditioners and refrigerators. Some of that refrigerant keeping me and my food cool will find its way into the atmosphere eventually. My future choices will have impact. I can demand zero ozone depleting substances instead of traditionally available compounds in future appliance purchases. When that sad day comes, instead of just calling the local service company with, "My air conditioner broke, help please" I can also ask, "...and I'm really concerned about the risk of releasing ozone-depleting refrigerants, so can you tell me how you guard against that during your repair work?" And I can pay a local refrigeration contractor to recycle the refrigerant from this equipment at the end of its useful life. I can demand low ozone depleting substances instead of traditionally available compounds in future appliance purchases.



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