

Report says internet shopping, working from home could increase carbon emissions

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Shopping on the internet or working from home could be increasing carbon emissions rather than helping to reduce them, a new report claims today.

The research reveals that people who shop online must order more than 25 items otherwise the impact on the environment is likely to be worse than traditional shopping.

It also highlights that working from home can increase home [energy use](#) by as much as 30 per cent, and can lead to people moving further from the workplace, stretching urban sprawl and increasing pollution.

The Institution of Engineering and Technology (IET) report looks at the 'rebound' effects of activities that are commonly thought to be green. Rebound effects are the unintended consequences of policies that are

designed to reduce emissions, but on closer analysis can move the emission's production elsewhere or lessen the positive impact.

Professor Phil Blythe, Chair of the IET Transport Policy Panel and Professor of Intelligent Transport Systems at Newcastle University, which produced the report, said: "We hear a lot about the environmental benefits achieved as a result of working from home. However, on closer inspection it does appear that any environmental benefits are marginal."

The report highlights that buying goods online can provide carbon savings, but only if the conditions are right. The study found that environmental savings can be achieved if online shopping replaces 3.5 traditional shopping trips, or if 25 orders are delivered at the same time, or, if the distance travelled to where the purchase is made is more than 50km.

Shopping online does not offer net environmental benefits unless these criteria are met. The report also highlights that the top 20 per cent of British households spend almost nine times as much on transport costs (such as air travel) as the bottom 20 per cent.

Professor Phil Blythe says: "Our report highlights two important messages for policy makers. Firstly, [climate change](#) is a real threat to our planet, so we must not get overwhelmed by the task and use rebound effects as an excuse not to act.

"Secondly, policy makers must do their homework to ensure that rebound effects do not negate the positive benefits of their policy initiatives and simply move carbon emissions from one sector to another."

Provided by Newcastle University

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