

Measuring Carbon Footprints:
Analysing Emissions Across the Surfboard Lifecycle

THE CARBON COST OF SURFBOARDS



WAVECHANGER
X CARBONHALO

2022



CONTENTS

- 01 INTRODUCTION 04
- 02 PROJECT PURPOSE 06
- 03 DATA SOURCES 08
- 04 SURFBOARD EMISSIONS 10
- 05 CONSTRUCTION PROCESS 14
- 06 SURFBOARDS VS OTHER CARBON EMITTERS 16
- 07 THE IMPACT OF SURFING 22
- 08 SOLUTIONS 32
- 09 APPENDIX 34
- 10 CALCULATIONS & DATA 38

Design for this project was very kindly supported by UTS Shopfront at the Centre for Social Justice and Inclusion and the Faculty of Design, Architecture and Building at the University of Technology Sydney. The Visual Communications team were Subin Yoon, Aleksander Vujinovic, Thi Thu Nguyen, Kara Liebenberg & Michelle Wiranata – supervised by Nicola Hardcastle.

The featured products, services and organisations shown in this publication are intended to give an overview of what's currently available and potentially on the horizon, to the best of our knowledge. The content of this guide has in no way been paid for or sponsored.

DATA PRODUCED BY CARBONHALO ,
WRITTEN BY WAVECHANGER © 2022



wavechanger.org



carbonhalo.org



uts.edu.au

In the quest for affordability, peak performance, and the mass production of boards to meet the surging demand among enthusiasts, the surfboard manufacturing landscape, particularly in terms of materials and technologies, has transitioned from artisanal, handcrafted masterpieces to standardised, disposable commodities. It's only in recent times that a shift in this tide is discernible, prompting a collective pause for reflection and a fundamental question...

WHAT IS THE **REAL** **COST** OF SURFING?

The repercussions extend well beyond mere economic factors, encompassing a broader spectrum of concerns. These encompass the impacts on our landfill sites, the delicate balance of coastal ecosystems, the vitality of marine biodiversity, and emphasise the undeniable social responsibility that both the surfing industry as a whole and every individual surfer bear.

THE AIM OF THIS RESEARCH
AND DATA PROJECT IS

TO **ENABLE** THE
SURFING WORLD
TO **REFLECT** ON

THESE FINDINGS
AND, WE **HOPE**,
PLAN A NEW
COURSE OF
ACTION.



WE **TRUST** THAT
THE INFORMATION
WILL HELP

TO **REDUCE** THE
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT
OF THE MATERIALS AND
PROCESSES INVOLVED
WITH **MANUFACTURING**
SURFBOARDS.

DATA SOURCES

Whilst this report is not a formalised study, the entire team are extremely passionate about surfing and the environment, and wanted to ensure that the information represented here is accurate. Where possible, Australian data has been used. For instances where Australian data was not available or could not be found, internationally recognised data from industry bodies and emissions databases has been utilised. Examples of data include industry specific data to extract material densities, supply chain experts for transportation factors, certified emissions factors for materials and construction processes, and equipment specifications to determine power consumption. For labour and effort, surfing industry experts - including shapers and suppliers - have been consulted. For surfboard usage, some assumptions have been applied to account for the occasional to the avid daily user. A complete list of source information can be found within the appendix to this document.

We've looked at four of the most common types of surfboards and calculated the carbon emissions of each board, expressed in kilograms of carbon dioxide or kg CO₂. Each calculation factors in the materials used and their embodied energy, the construction method, the distribution (packaging and transportation), the usage and lifetime maintenance, and finally the waste and disposal factors.

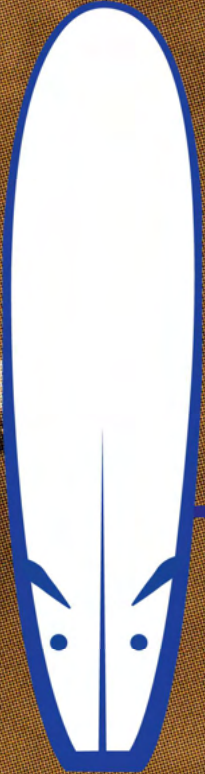
TYPICAL 6FT SHORTBOARD
(EPS BLANK + EPOXY RESIN)

=165 KG CO₂



TYPICAL 7FT SOFT TOP
(EPS BLANK + EVA FOAM)

=167 KG CO₂



TYPICAL 8FT MINI MALIBU
(EPS BLANK + EPOXY RESIN)

=198 KG CO₂



TYPICAL 9FT LONGBOARD
(EPS BLANK + EPOXY RESIN)

=217 KG CO₂

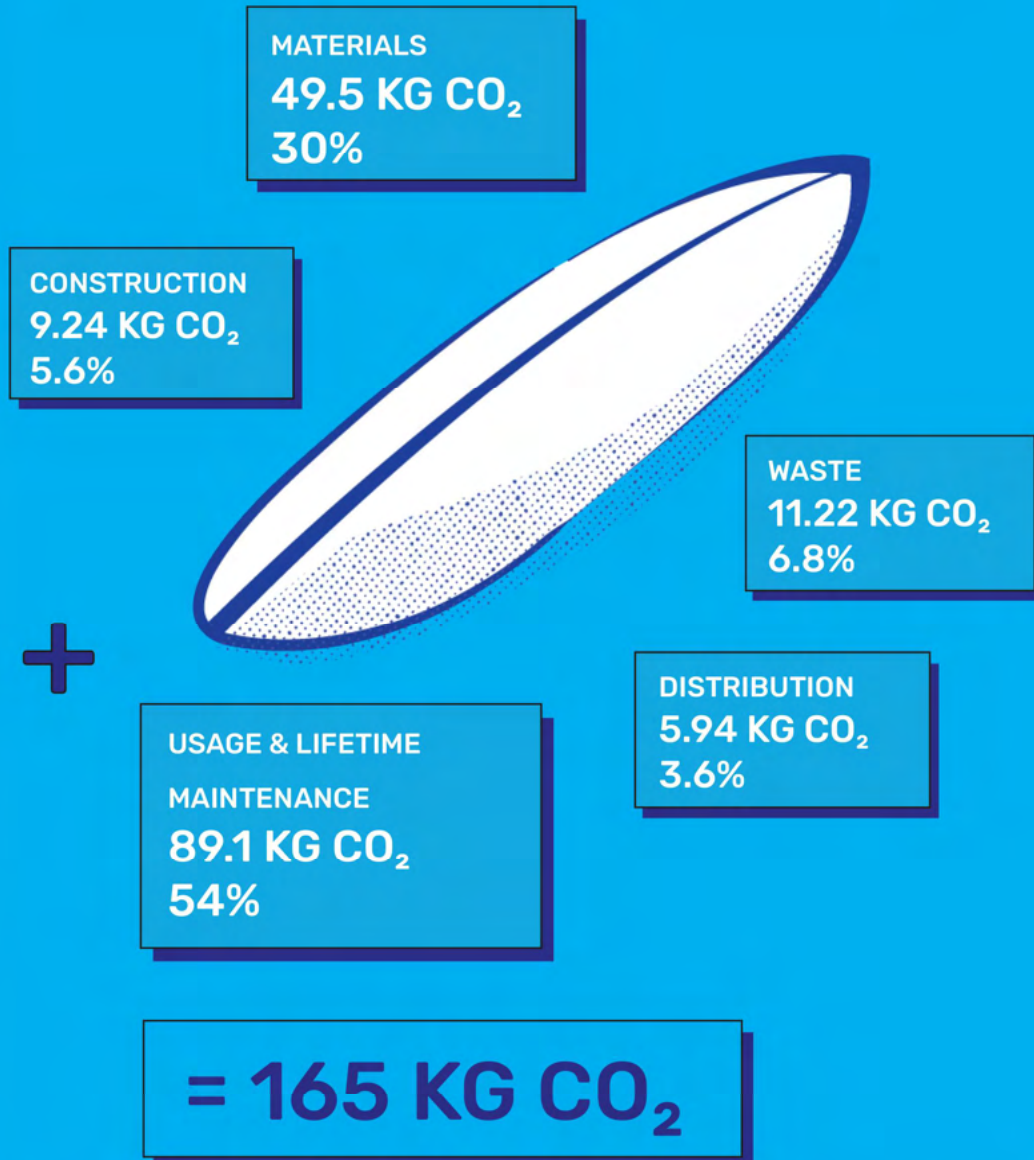


Refer to pages 40-43 for detailed calculations

HAVE YOU EVER
WONDERED WHERE
MOST OF THE CO₂ IS
CAPTURED WITHIN YOUR
SURFBOARD?

WHAT INDIVIDUAL
COMPONENTS HAVE
MORE OF A NEGATIVE
IMPACT ON THE
ENVIRONMENT?

BREAKDOWN OF EMISSIONS FOR A TYPICAL 6FT SHORTBOARD



= 165 KG CO₂

Refer to pages 38-43 for detailed calculations

05 HAND SHAPED VS CNC MACHINE

CONSTRUCTION PROCESS:

CALCULATED EMISSIONS FROM THE CONSTRUCTION PROCESS OF SURFBOARDS

Based on CAD power, electrical planer, air-con and air-filtering, vacuum cleaner, lighting and power.

STANDARD 6FT SHORTBOARD HAND-SHAPED CONSTRUCTION:

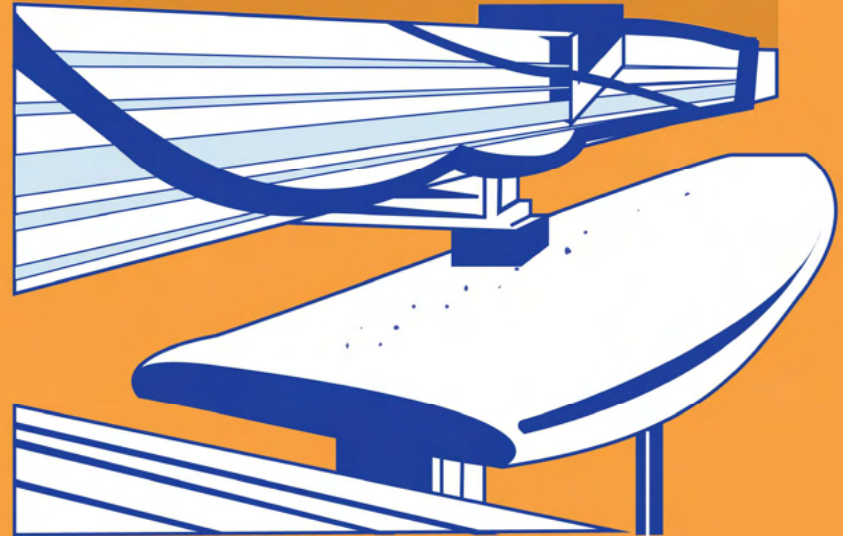
4.93 KG CO₂



Based on CAD power, CNC machining, air-con and air-filtering, vacuum cleaner, lighting and power.

STANDARD 6FT SHORTBOARD CONSTRUCTION BY CNC MACHINE:

3.53 KG CO₂



Based on glassing each side, curing, clean-up, hot coat, sanding, lighting and power.

STANDARD 6FT SHORTBOARD GLASSING/LAMINATION:

4.27 KG CO₂



	SURFBOARD LENGTH			
	6FT	7FT	8FT	9FT
HAND SHAPE	4.93	7.40	12.34	19.74
MACHINE SHAPE	3.53	3.53	3.53	3.53
GLASS	4.27	5.33	6.40	7.47
HAND SHAPE & GLASS	9.20	12.73	18.74	27.20
MACHINE SHAPE & GLASS	7.80	8.86	9.93	11.00

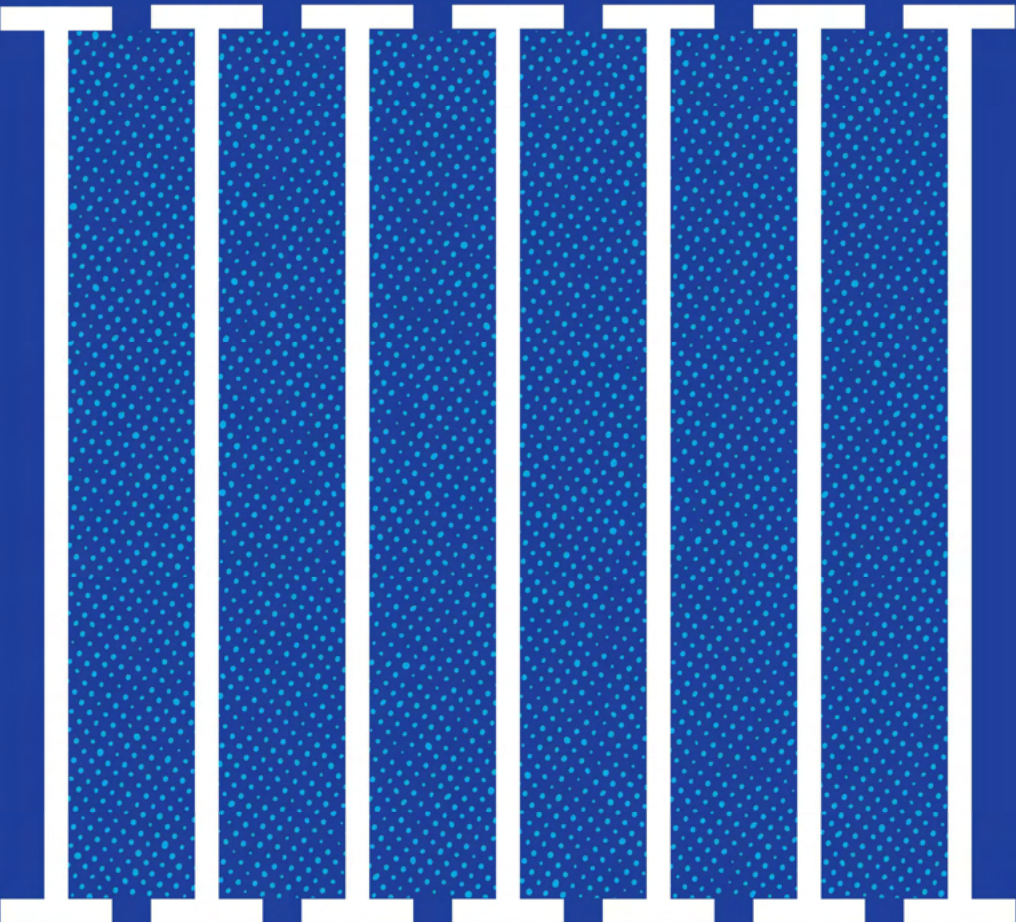
Refer to pages 38 & 39 for detailed calculations of construction process

06 SURFBOARDS vs OTHER CARBON EMITTERS

YOU COULD FILL

7 X 50M

OLYMPIC SIZED SWIMMING POOLS WITH THE GLOBAL TOTAL OF EXPANDED POLYSTYRENE FOAM USED IN SURFBOARD MANUFACTURING, EACH YEAR. ****



THE CARBON EMISSIONS FROM A
TYPICAL 6FT SHORTBOARD*

(165 KG CO₂)

EQUALS THE SAME EMISSIONS AS
CONTINUALLY DRIVING A PETROL
VEHICLE FOR

**700 KM
(435 MILES)**



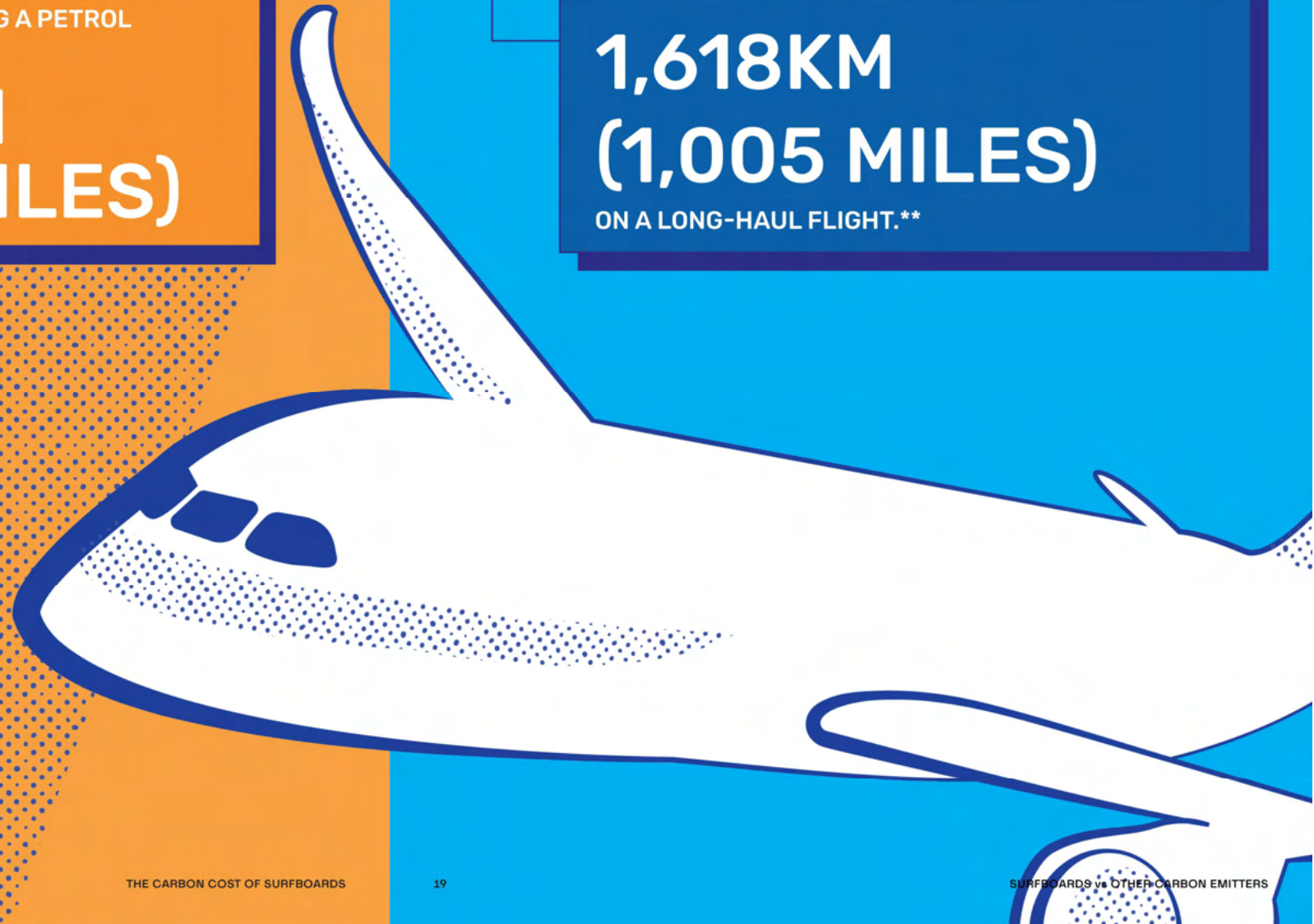
OR A SINGLE PASSENGER FLYING
NON-STOP FOR

650 KM (404 MILES)

ON A SHORT-HAUL FLIGHT, OR

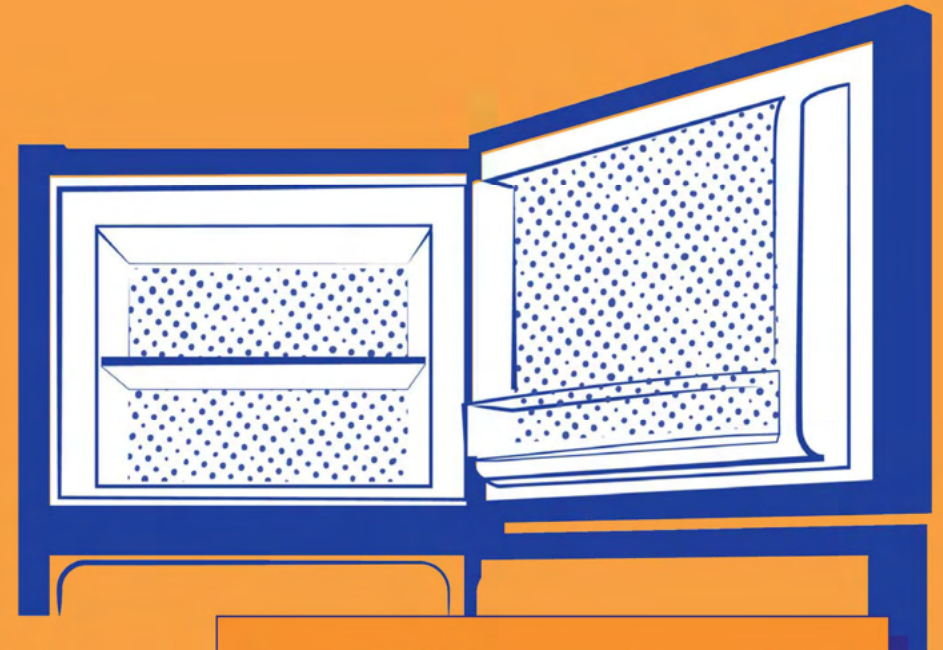
**1,618KM
(1,005 MILES)**

ON A LONG-HAUL FLIGHT.**



THE GREENHOUSE GASES (GHG) FOR
THE SAME 6FT SHORTBOARD

(165 KG CO₂)



IS THE EQUIVALENT OF CONTINUALLY
RUNNING A HOUSEHOLD FRIDGE FOR

320 DAYS.***

*TOTAL EMISSIONS FROM MATERIALS, CONSTRUCTION, DISTRIBUTION, LIFETIME USAGE + MAINTENANCE, AND WASTE.

**THE CARBON COST OF TRAVELLING ON LONG-HAUL FLIGHTS IS A LOWER FIGURE ON AVERAGE PER KILOMETRE BECAUSE OF THE HUGE AMOUNT OF EMISSIONS GIVEN OFF DURING TAKE-OFF AND LANDING.

***BASED ON TYPICAL 180W HOUSEHOLD FRIDGE RUNNING FOR 1500 HOURS (POWER VARIES DEPENDING ON FRIDGE BEING OPEN/CLOSED)

****BASED ON A TYPICAL SHORTBOARD CONTAINING 35 LITRES OF EPS FOAM. ONE OLYMPIC SWIMMING POOL = 2.5 MILLION LITRES

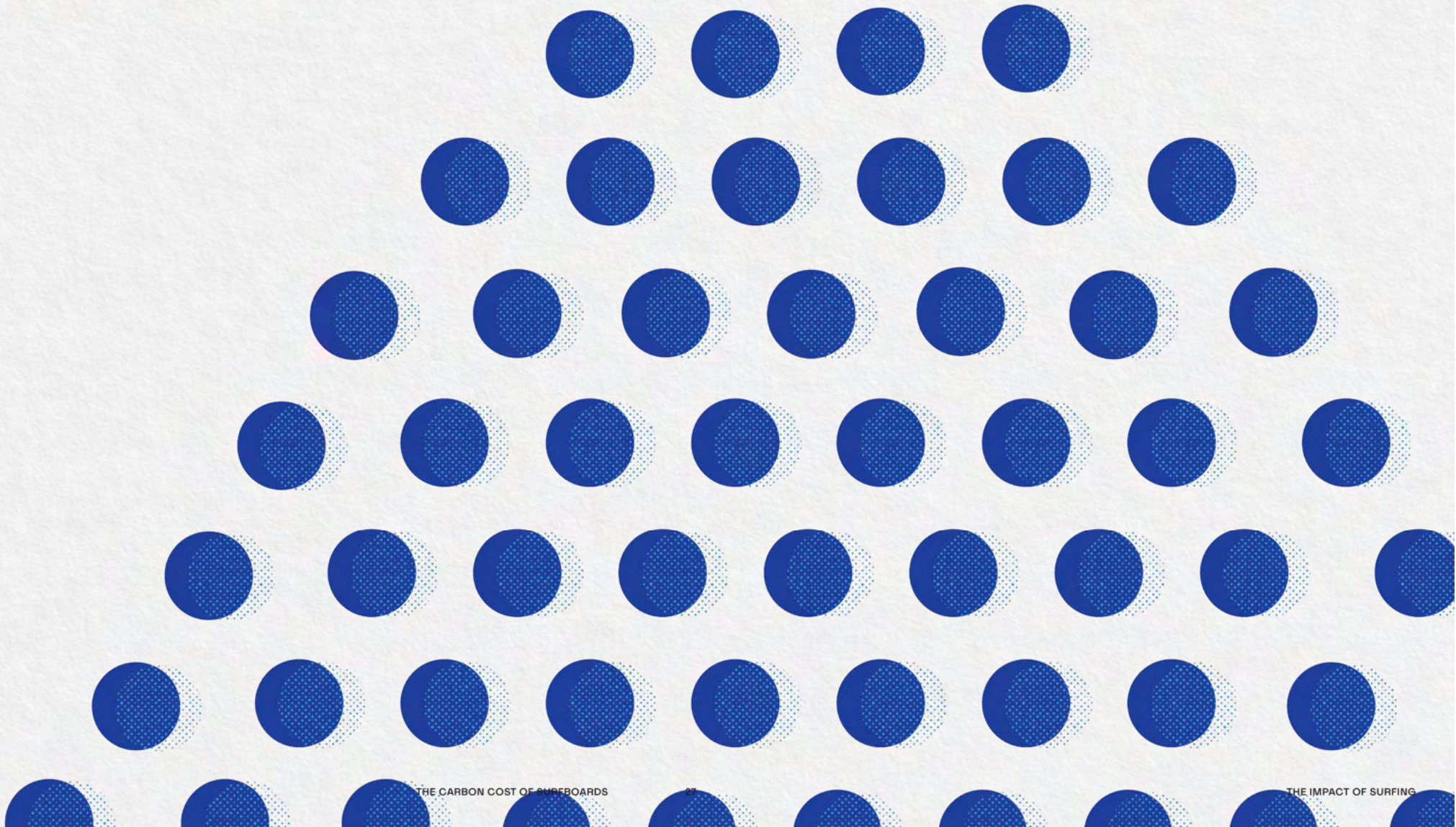
APPROXIMATELY
500,000 NEW
SURFBOARDS ARE
SOLD EACH YEAR
AROUND THE GLOBE,
WITH ROUGHLY HALF
THAT NUMBER BEING
SOLD IN THE USA



**THE GLOBAL SURF
INDUSTRY IS WORTH
US \$2.7 BILLION
(AU\$3.95 BILLION)
FOR THE YEAR 2022**

**ESTIMATES FOR THE
BREAKDOWN OF POLYSTYRENE
(ONE OF THE MAIN TYPES OF
FOAM USED IN SURFBOARD
BLANKS) RANGE FROM 500 TO
1 MILLION YEARS.**

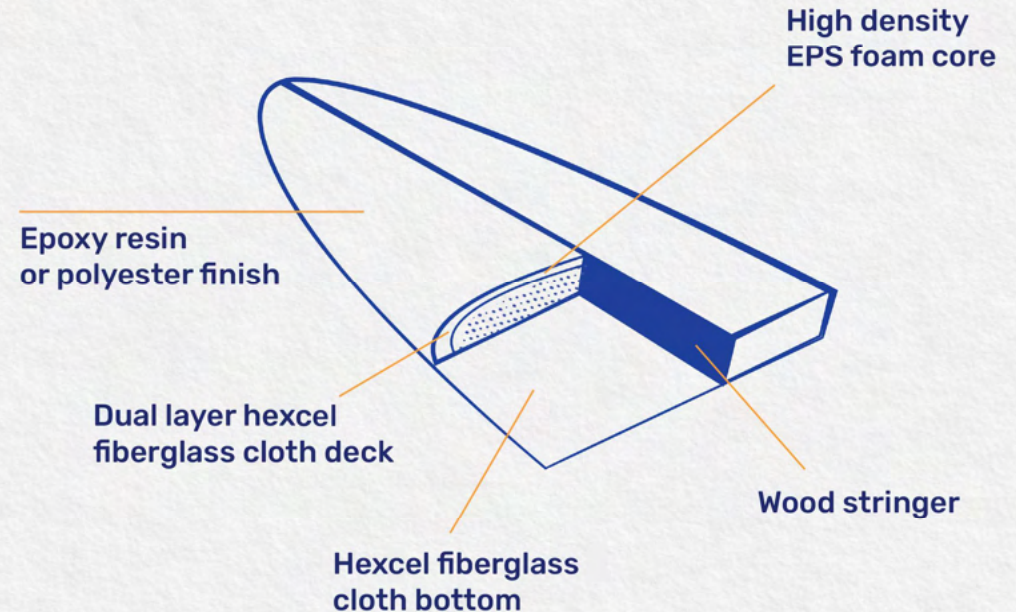
**RATHER THAN DEGRADE, IT
BREAKS INTO PIECES, WHICH
IS OFTEN WORSE BECAUSE
THOSE SMALL PIECES (OR
MICROPLASTICS) WILL
SPREAD FAR AND WIDE.**



SURFBOARDS ARE NOTORIOUSLY DIFFICULT TO TAKE APART FOR RECYCLING.

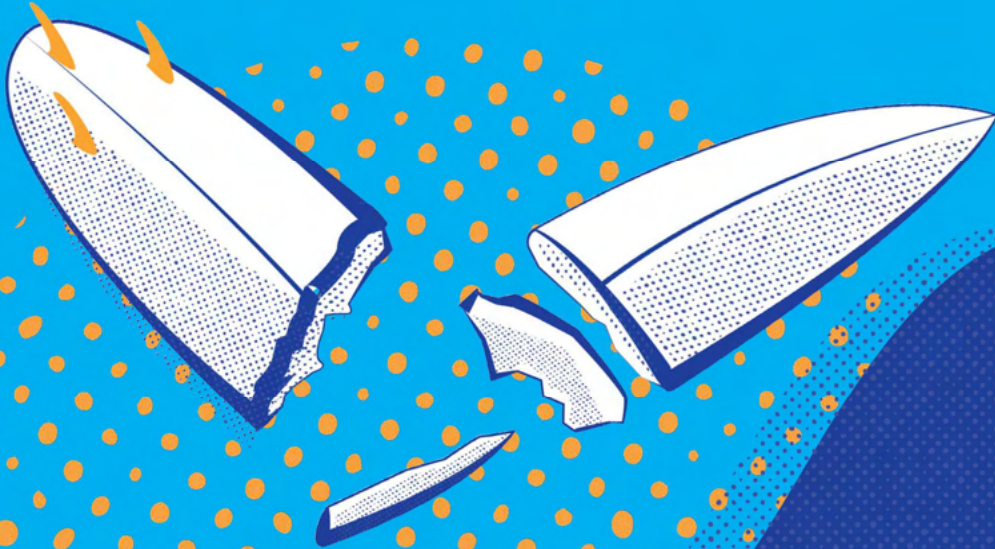
THE FOAM BLANK (OR CORE) OFTEN CONTAINS A CENTRAL TIMBER SUPPORT PIECE CALLED A STRINGER.

THE OUTER FINISH OF POLYESTER OR EPOXY RESIN HAS FIBREGLASS CLOTH SET WITHIN IT, AND A SURFBOARD TYPICALLY HAS FIN BOXES AND A LEASH PLUG FIXED WITH GLUE AND ALSO SET WITHIN THE RESIN.



ONCE BROKEN OPEN AND THEY BEGIN TO FALL APART, MODERN SURFBOARDS ARE AN ENVIRONMENTAL DISASTER DUE TO THE PETROLEUM-BASED MATERIALS AND SHEER VOLUME OF THEM.

EVEN SURF WAX, TYPICALLY PARAFFIN-BASED, IS HARMFUL ONCE IT ENTERS THE OCEAN AS IT CLOGS REEFS AND IS MISTAKENLY EATEN BY MARINE LIFE.



Going forward, if you're reading this and working in the surfing industry, here are some questions to ask yourself that could help reduce your emissions and overall carbon footprint.

1.0

Could you look to introduce locally sourced materials and even set-up (or share) an onshore/local manufacturing facility?

1.1

How about sourcing alternative materials that replace any existing petroleum-based, harmful substances. Natural materials such as paulownia, cork, bamboo, balsa wood, and even next-gen materials such as mycelium or algae. At the very least, look to include recycled content rather than using raw, virgin materials from non-renewable sources.

1.2

Can you reassess your product's packaging and look to reduce it or replace the harmful materials being used? Plastic can be replaced with cardboard, for example.

1.3

Is your product easy to recycle? Can the number of parts and/or types of materials be reduced so that it avoids being a recycling nightmare? Some sports equipment, such as running shoes, are now being made with just one type of material. Adidas have developed a shoe made from only one type of Thermoplastic Polyurethane that can be recycled upon return.

1.4

Could you explore a leasing model, where users rent your product and return it once they've finished using it or when it breaks? The manufacturer can then reuse or recycle those materials, and in the worst case scenario, can dispose of them safely. The definition of a circular production facility.

1.5

This next one appeals to the users as well as the manufacturers. Can you look to reduce the carbon footprint of the lifetime usage and maintenance of your product? Fix your own surfboard, take care of it, and extend its life. Reduce the amount of toxic wax you use by buying cork traction panels. Reduce the frequency and distance of travel that's associated with surfing. Pass on unused/broken surfboards to those looking to learn to surf, or transform it into an art project, and do whatever it takes to avoid sending it to landfill.

1.6

For any unavoidable emissions, look to become carbon neutral with a provider such as Carbonhalo.
www.carbonhalo.com ←
 Offset your emissions with verified carbon credits that fund emissions reductions projects across the globe.

1.7

For more ideas and inspiration, visit www.wavechanger.org to access our learning resources; including podcast, blog and further research projects. Our mission is to lead the surf community to embrace sustainable solutions and reduce the environmental impact of surfing.

All EF not stated below	The Integrated Carbon Metrics (ICM) Embodied Carbon Life Cycle Inventory Database, "Wiedmann, T., Teh, S. H. and Yu, M. (2019) ICM Database - Integrated Carbon Metrics Embodied Carbon Life Cycle Inventory Database"
Fibreglass Layers	https://www.boardcave.com.au/information/surf-board-glass
Resin Chart	https://cdn.shopify.com/s/files/1/0689/1441/files/Surfboard_Glassing_Resin_Amounts_Per_Board_Length.pdf?7799691258_253686780
Catalyst Chart	https://cdn.shopify.com/s/files/1/0689/1441/files/Surfboard_Glassing_Resin_Amounts_Per_Board_Length.pdf?7799691258_253686780
PU foam density	https://cdn.shopify.com/s/files/1/2994/9530/files/Surfblanks_Density_Chart_2014.pdf?2360690609765356245
PU resin density	https://allnexproductseu.blob.core.windows.net/products/40/2d3d7a859f5d4316887b-3350b821e5b0/2021-08-25/POLYPLEX-SURF-BOARD-LAMINATING-RESIN_EN_A4.pdf
PU rubber cord density	https://www.gteek.com/Polyurethane-rubber-cord
Epoxy Resin density	https://shapers.com.au/content/Kinetix%20R110X%20surfboard.pdf
MEKP density	https://www.amcsupplies.com.au/wp-content/uploads/MEKP-Catalyst-SDS-1.pdf
PVC density	https://www.vynova-group.com/hubfs/02_Web-site_Pages/Products/PVC/Documents/vynova_polyvinylchloride_GB_rev010_0_2015-830.pdf?hsCtaTracking=1b4e11ef-1379-48c1-af73-2e07fcedcab6%7C53beaf85-8f40-4c2c-bbcb-71dd2f-9547bc
Fibreglass Fin layers	https://greenlightsurfsupply.com/pages/i-wan-to-make-fins-do-you-know-how-make-layers-of-fiberglass-cloth-are-required-to-get-the-right-thickness-so-the-base-will-be-thick-enough-to-go-into-a-normal-fin-single-fin-base-also-how-much-resin

Surfboard Construction	https://greenlightsurfsupply.com/pages/green-light-surfboard-building-guide-page-3
Fin Data	https://www.surffcs.com.au/pages/fcs-fin-data
Carbon Fiber Density	https://www.opchealth.com.au/Content/Images/uploaded/PDFs/Carbon%20Fibre%20MSDS.pdf
EPS and XPS density	https://www.sanded.com.au/pages/core-basics
Stringer Size	https://surfblanksaustralia.com/pages/an-introduction-to-surf-blanks-stringer-products
IXPE foam density	https://www.foamsales.com.au/products/polyethylene-roll
EVA foam density	https://www.foamsales.com.au/collections/polyethylene/pro-ducts/eva-foam-sheets-sky-blue-colour
Epoxy Resin EF (search for epoxide resin)	https://www.carbonfootprint.com/factors.aspx
PVC EF	https://www.carbonfootprint.com/factors.aspx
EVA EF	https://www.alcas.asn.au/auslci-emissions-factors
Carbon Fiber EF	Suzuki, T., & Takahashi, J. (2005, November). Prediction of energy intensity of carbon fiber reinforced plastics for mass-produced passenger cars. In Proceedings of 9th Japan International SAMPE Symposium (pp. 14-19).
Neoprene density	https://www.landscapepros.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Neoprene-SDS.pdf

Hypalon density	https://irp-cdn.multiscreensite.com/d4974b4a/files/uploaded/Chang%20Rubber%20-%20MSDS%20Hypalon%20Rubber%20Sheet%20THHPL135665.pdf
Fibreglass waste EF	https://www.climatiq.io/explorer
Balsa Density	https://www.woodsolutions.com.au/wood-species/hardwood/balsa#:~:text=Balsa%20wood%20is%20the%20lightest,Baltic%20pine%20(Pinus%20sylvestris)
Plywood Density	https://www.australply.com.au/technical/characteristics#:~:text=Density%20and%20species%20of%20timber,-The%20density%20of&text=The%20density%20of%20pine%20plywood,500%20%2D%20650%20kg%2Fm3
Nylon Waste EF (assumed as textiles)	https://www.alcas.asn.au/auslci-emissions-factors
Steel Waste EF	https://www.climatiq.io/explorer
Cardboard Emissions	https://www.climatiq.io/explorer
Cardboard Box Sizing	https://fefcobox.site/
Avg. Freight dist in Aus	https://www.freightaustralia.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/commodity-report--vehicles.pdf
Road Freight EF	https://www.climatiq.io/explorer
Sea Freight EF	https://www.webcargo.co/knowledge-base/tools/freight-co2-emissions-calculator/
Cardboard Size Calc	https://fefcobox.site/

Appliance EF	https://www.digitaltechnologieshub.edu.au/media/huppewx4/home-energy-use_calculating-ghg-emissions_electrical-appliances.pdf
Surfboard repair quantity	https://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.6.05.1046&rep=rep1&type=pdf
Surfwax EF	https://espace.library.uq.edu.au/data/UQ_28c5949/UQ28c5949_0A.pdf?Expires=1661177871&Key-Pair-Id=APKAJKNB34MJBJNC6NLO&Signature=UQ3BjEIT0rhVqVN5tiul-QH4fRQMV0LN_RyqSTwEEFcz4Eaol3f0R2UN-R2IGg3rbflowTtZTIXqkBJp9la4P0_XYaYC2kxqjaztyP71QJSL-zsXVYloiiJaegi-j7GFqdVMP8nosG02IulZrXAmkoI8OfjTHyLe0ocpdTOXf-lvCWK6mxVld-fwnKD00-5Z_PR7FR04z6lKsUPMnSC-K2kXQ9M-Rreqg-G0vsnk1GQwxtAxaJ88_a2XRDh77ahFaMo-0hSWrKFASgIT0s4QSeoqaFlwCYD4Ale4hy37kiKjmOIMobiGmMPTA1bbClpE3j2n080kb1Z3yNVaLpaCFMPV.5Hf0__
Car EF	https://www.ntc.gov.au/transport-reform/light-vehicle-emissions

Analysis of the construction process of typical 6ft shortboard. Hand shaped, CNC machine, and glassing/laminating stages. Data calculated by Carbonhalo.

Carbon emissions measured as metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent (CO2e)

Standard 6ft Board – Construction process by Hand

Activity	Time	Average time (hours)	Watts	Power Consumption kWh	Emmissions CO2e
a. Computer for board design	20-30min	0.42	250	0.10	0.08
b. Hand Shaping using an Electric Plainer	2-3hrs	2.5	700	1.75	1.40
c. Sand Paper by hand	1hr	1			0.00
d. Air conditioner running for entire process (also doubles as an air filter / extraction)	4hrs	4	1000	4	3.20
e. Vacuum cleaner	10min	0.17	1400	0.23	0.19
f. Shaping bay will have lighting running also the entire time (LED) 4 light banks	4hrs	4	20	0.08	0.06
g. Estimated time for total construction including shaping	4hrs	4			
Allowance for board size increments for every ft increase in size.	30min	0.5			

Standard 6ft Board – Construction process by CNC Machine

Activity	Time	Average time (hours)	Watts	Power Consumption kWh	Emmissions
a. Computer for board design	20-30min	0.42	250	0.10	0.08
b. CNC Machining (Model AKU) or (APS 3000)	15-20min	0.3	6160	2.05	1.64
c. Final shaping post CNC = Hand Sand	1hr	1		0.25	0.20
d. Air conditioning running for entire process	2hrs	2	1000	2	1.6
e. Estimated time for total shaping	2hrs	2			

Standard 6ft Board – Glassing after shaping

Activity	Time	Average time (hours)	Watts	Power Consumption kWh	Emmissions
a. Glassing each side (2 sides)	30min each side	1		1.02	0.816
b. Curing time	1-3 hrs	2		2.04	1.632
c. Clean up edges and laps	30min - 1hr	0.8		0.77	0.612
d. Hot coat each side (2 sides)	10-15min each side	0.25		0.26	0.204
e. Sanding hot coat	45min - 1hr	1		1.25	1.002666667
f. Estimated total time for glassing 3 – 3.5hrs (excludes curing time)	3.5hrs	3.5			
Allowance for board size increments for every ft increase in size.	15min	0.25			
Electrical EF kg CO2/kWh	0.8				

	6ft	7ft	8ft	9ft
Hand Shape	4.93	7.40	12.34	19.74
Machine Shape	3.53	3.53	3.53	3.53
Glass	4.27	5.33	6.40	7.47
Hand Shape & Glass	9.20	12.73	18.74	27.20
Machine Shape & Glass	7.80	8.86	9.93	11.00
Carbon emissions measured as metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent (CO2e)				

Product Stage			Construction Stage	Use Stage								End-of-life Stage			Benefits beyond system boundary	
A1	A2	A3	A4	A5	B1	B2	B3	B4	B5	B6	B7	C1	C2	C3	C4	D
RAW MATERIAL SUPPLY	TRANSPORT	MANUFACTURING	TRANSPORT	CONSTRUCTION-INSTALLATION PROCESS	USE	MAINTENANCE	REPAIR	REPLACEMENT	REFURBISHMENT	OPERATIONAL ENERGY USE	OPERATIONAL WATER USE	DECONSTRUCTION DEMOLITION	TRANSPORT	WASTE PROCESSING	DISPOSAL	REUSE, RECOVERY, RECYCLING POTENTIAL

**Analysis of typical lifetime maintenance and usage of 6ft, 7ft and 8ft surfboards.
Data calculated by Carbonhalo.**

Carbon emissions measured as metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent (CO2e)

Dings

Component	Quantity (Polyester Lamination)	Quantity (Epoxy Lamination)	Unit
4oz Fiberglass	8.36E-02	8.36E-02	m^2
Resin	5.44E-04	5.06E-04	m^3
Catalyst	1.18E-05		m^3
Electrical Consumption	2.3	2.5	kWh
Emissions	5.48E+00	6.94E+00	kg

Wax

Wax block	Quantity	Unit	
Wax block	0.1	kg	1 bar per application for shortboard + 1/4 block per ft
Number of wax applications	7		Once every 2 months of surfboard lifetime (~1year) + 1 block for fresh coat every surf
Basic Wax EF	0.718	kg/kg	

	6ft surfboard	7ft surfboard	8ft surfboard
Emissions	0.5026	0.62825	0.7539
Drivetime	Monthly	Weekly	Daily
Use freq	12	50	250
Avg Dist	30	15	6
Passenger Car EF (kg/km)	0.1495		
Emissions	53.82	112.125	448.5

Avg Lifetime of board is ~1year

**IT'S ONLY RECENTLY
WE'RE SEEING THAT
THE TIDE IS CHANGING
TO PAUSE, EVALUATE
AND ASK -
WHAT IS THE REAL
COST OF SURFING?**

**COST BEYOND
ECONOMICS, THAT
CONSIDERS THE COST
TO OUR LANDFILL
SITES, COASTLINES,
MARINE-LIFE AND AN
INESCAPABLE SOCIAL
RESPONSIBILITY
OF THE SURFING
INDUSTRY AND
EVERY SURFER.**



WAVECHANGER

wavechanger.org



carbonhalo

carbonhalo.org



UTS SHOPFRONT
Community-University-Engagement

uts.edu.au