

Fiberglass insulation plants (NAICS 327933) operate high temperature furnaces that melt siliceous minerals and other materials to produce glass wool used for fiberglass insulation.ⁱ Fiberglass insulation production is part of the primary glass manufacturing industry which is energy intensive and a significant source of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from the industrial sector. In 2019, 23 fiberglass insulation plants reported direct emissions of 1,213,287 million metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalents (CO₂e) to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).ⁱⁱ Emissions from these plants represent about 53% of total direct emissions from fiberglass insulation manufacturers.ⁱⁱⁱ

Reducing glass plant GHG emissions and product carbon intensity are important goals for both the glass industry and its customers. To assist the U.S. fiberglass insulation industry in evaluating its efforts to decarbonize its manufacturing operations, EPA calculated the 2019 carbon intensities for fiberglass plants based on total direct emissions and glass produced (i.e., melted). These intensities serve as reference points for the industry’s carbon performance, represented as metric tons of carbon emitted per ton of fiberglass. The intensities are derived from fiberglass insulation plant data reported to the U.S. EPA Greenhouse Gas Reporting Program (GHGRP) and reflect direct emissions (Scope 1) from on-site fuel use and process emissions, the largest sources of GHG emissions from fiberglass insulation plants.^{iv} The table below presents quartile carbon emissions intensities for total fiberglass produced.^v For this study, the 75th percentile reflects plants with lower carbon intensities and the 25th percentile reflects plants with higher carbon intensities. The 50th percentile is the median.

2019 Direct Carbon Intensities

Quartile	Metric Ton CO ₂ e/ Metric Ton (MT) of Fiberglass	Carbon Intensity
75 th percentile	0.381	Low
50 th percentile (median)	0.483	Midpoint
25 th percentile	0.748	High

Methodology

Fiberglass insulation plants operating in the United States and its territories with annual emissions of 25,000 MT CO₂e or greater report total annual greenhouse gas emissions and total glass produced under the U.S. EPA GHGRP. These emissions reflect all GHG emissions from fuel combustion and the release of carbon dioxide from processing of carbonated raw materials (process emissions) at the plant.^{vi} Data for calendar year 2019 (January – December) were analyzed. Carbon intensities for glass produced were calculated for each plant by dividing total annual CO₂e emissions from by the plant’s total annual glass production. A distribution of plant carbon intensities was created, and the intensity levels for the 25th, 50th, and 75th percentiles were calculated.

For the purposes of this evaluation, a plant with a carbon intensity at the 75th percentile emits less carbon dioxide per metric ton of glass than a plant with carbon intensity around the median intensity level (i.e., 50th percentile). Fiberglass insulation plants operating at the 50th percentile perform at the midpoint for the industry, while plants operating above the 50th percentile (i.e., those plants with intensities lower than 0.483 CO₂e per ton of glass) are operating at above average carbon performance and emit lower levels of CO₂e per ton of glass than plants below the median. Plants operating at or below the 25th percentile emit higher levels of CO₂e per ton of glass. Those seeking to compare their fiberglass insulation plant’s carbon intensity to the benchmarked quartiles should use the plant’s annual data submission to U.S. EPA, if available, or follow the reporting rules of the U.S. EPA GHGRP for calendar year 2019 and the following calculation using metric tons (MT):

$$MT\ CO_2e/MT\ fiberglass\ produced = Total\ plant\ MT\ CO_2e\ emissions / total\ plant\ MT\ glass\ production$$

Observations

The quartile distributions of carbon intensities for fiberglass insulation plants show a wide range of performance and demonstrate the opportunity for improvement among plants. Fiberglass from plants at the 75th percentile is 21% less carbon intensive than fiberglass from plants at the 50th percentile. The difference in carbon intensity between glass from plants at the 50th versus 25th quartiles is 35%. The table below shows the differences in carbon intensity between the quartiles.

Inter-quartile differences in carbon intensity ^{vii}	Fiberglass Insulation
75 th vs 50 th	21%
50 th vs 25 th	35%
75 th vs 25 th	49%

No correlations were observed between carbon intensity and plant location, with plants in all quartiles being found in different parts of the country.

Glass manufacturers can reduce carbon dioxide emissions from on-site fuel use in furnaces and from process-related emissions in a variety of ways, including:

- increased use of cullet,
- enhanced adoption of energy efficiency measures that reduce fuel consumption; and
- electrification of furnaces as the grid incorporates greater renewable energy.

Periodically reviewing emissions intensities provides an opportunity to see the progress made by manufacturers' adoption of these and other strategies that can lower carbon intensity in the production of final glass products.

For more information about the EPA's Greenhouse Reporting program

Glass Plant Reporting Requirements: <https://www.epa.gov/ghgreporting/subpart-n-glass-production>

Glass Technical Support Documentation: <https://www.epa.gov/ghgreporting/subpart-n-technical-support-document>

Code of Federal Regulations – Subpart N Glass Plants: <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-40/chapter-I/subchapter-C/part-98/subpart-N>

Relationship of the GHGRP to the national *Inventory of U.S. Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Sinks*: <https://www.epa.gov/ghgreporting/greenhouse-gas-reporting-program-and-us-inventory-greenhouse-gas-emissions-and-sinks>.

ⁱ This analysis focuses on plants primarily producing glass fiber for insulation. Plants primarily producing fiberglass cloth, mat, loose strands, and other glass fiber products were excluded from the analysis to greatest extent possible.

ⁱⁱ In 2019, total direct emissions from all glass manufacturing plants reporting to the GHGRP were 7.8 million metric tons of CO₂e from 102 plants. 16% of these emissions are from fiberglass insulation plants.

ⁱⁱⁱ Glass plants with annual emissions of 25,000 MTCO₂e or higher are required to report to the GHGRP. In 2019, 23 fiberglass insulation plants reported total emissions of 1,213,287 MT CO₂e. Using other EPA databases, company plant lists, and other sources, EPA estimates there are 43 fiberglass insulation plants currently operating in the U.S. 20 of these plants have annual emissions under 25,000 MT CO₂e and are not required to report to the GHGRP.

^{iv} Indirect (Scope 2) GHG emissions associated with electricity use represent between 25 -35% of total emissions from fiberglass glass plants. Direct emissions (Scope 1) from fuel use and process emissions are the largest source of GHG emissions.

^v 40 CFR 98.146(a)(2) and (b)(3) requires reporting of the annual quantity of glass produced by each glass melting furnace and by all furnaces combined (tons).

^{vi} Emissions include non-CO₂ greenhouse gases converted to CO₂e based on the gas's global warming potential. Non-CO₂ gases represent less than 1% of total GHG emissions in the glass sector.

^{vii} The inter-quartile difference was calculated as the percent difference between a lower quartile and a higher quartile (i.e., 50th-25th /25th).