

## 10 Minutes For The Planet

China-breathing more easily ©
by Sarah Heath and Catherine Balter-Kendall
Stressed syllables are underlined and in bold.\*

Hello! I'm Sarah Heath and you're listening to 10 Minutes for the Planet on EnglishWaves.

Closed off from the rest of the world for so many years, the second half of the 20th century saw China **forge through** to become the world's number one economy that it is today. The introduction of free-market reforms in 1979 launched a massive period of growth which meant that by 1990, China produced around 3% of global manufacturing.

But in the following twenty years, this figure grew to 25%. To put that into context, statistics **compiled** for a story by the National Geographic maga**zine** several years ago showed that China produced 80% of the world's air conditioners, 70% of its mobile phones and 60% of its shoes. The World Bank described Chinese economic growth as "the fastest sustained ex**pan**sion by a major economy in history". This **staggering** rise has **provided** employment for the Chinese population, improving their standard of living, but what are the effects to the environment? All this production has made China the top energy consumer worldwide and 30% of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions are produced by this vast nation.

The Chinese **government** is aware of the impact its **phenomenal** production levels is having on the planet. In 2010, the Chinese Ministry for the Environment implemented an "environmental census" which reported that there were 5.9 million sources of pollution across the country. Last year, that figure had jumped to 9 million of which 7.4 million originated from factories, many of which were not **complying** to government guidelines on emissions.

Aside from resulting negative effects on climate, air pol<u>lu</u>tion is a serious **cause for concern** for human health. The World Health Organisation estimates that around seven million people die from the effects of poor air quality around the world each year.



to forge through (phrasal vb.) to make progress by a concerted effort

compiled (adj.) put together

**staggering** (adj.) shocking because of being large

to provide (vb.) to give

worldwide (adv.) internationally

phenomenal (adj.) huge,
enormous

to comply to (phrasal vb.) to follow, to respect

cause for concern (exp.) something that we should worry about

**Smog** in major Chinese cities became so bad **prior to** the 2013 guidelines that aerial **pho**tographs could **barely** make out even the tallest **skyscrapers** in many of them.

Poor air quality is usually measured by atmospheric particulate matter or PM. It is often referred to as fine particles which are measured under a microscope. The particles causing the most concern to human health are PM2.5 which measure about 3% of the diameter of a human hair and can easily be inhaled by humans. The majority of these fine particles are emitted from power plants, car exhausts, aeroplanes and agricultural burning.

And the main **culprit**? Coal. Electricity production, manufacturing and the **construction** industry use enormous quantities of this unenvironmentally-friendly fossil fuel, with one study reporting that more coal was used in the 700km radius around Beijing than in the entire United States. And in another example, cement production alone is **respon**sible for 10% of the country's total emissions, which is **nine-fold** what India produces.

The government is putting strategies in position to combat the environmental damage being created. Drastic measures were quickly implemented and have seen impressive improvements. In Beijing, the average concentration of PM2.5 was reduced to 58 micrograms per cubic metre, compared to 90 in 2013. The World Health Organisation stipulates a level of 10 micrograms per cubic metre.

They have also **pledged** to reduce the use of coal as their main source of energy to 58% of total **consump**tion by 2020 and want to **shift** the focus of its economy to less climate-affecting industries such as services. And there is reason to be hopeful at the radical measures the Chinese are taking: according to the United Nations Environment Program, they are **up there** with very few other countries who will **success**fully make the targets set by the 2015 Paris Agreement to reduce carbon emissions.

In case the view is that **the buck stops at China's door**, it would do well to remember that if we want **stuff**, they will make it. Reduce the demand and the pressure on the environment from excessive production will therefore also auto<u>ma</u>tically decrease. We are all in this together – the environment has little regard for political borders.

Tune in next week for more stories on the environment, here on English Waves.

**smog** (n.) a mixture of smoke and fog, a polluting haze

prior to (exp.) before

barely (adv.) with difficulty

**skyscraper** (n.) a very tall building, a tower block

to inhale (vb.) to breathe in

**power plants** (exp.) factories which produce energy

**exhaust** (n.) toxic emission from a car

**culprit** (n.) the cause or the person responsible for sth. bad

**nine-fold** (exp.) multiplied by nine

**to pledge** (vb.) to give a solemn promise

to shift (vb.) to change, to move

up there (exp.) near the top

the buck stops at.. (exp.) the responsibility lies with

stuff (n.) things

## \*Tip!

Words ending in -tion or -sion always have their main stress on the penultimate syllable:

intro<u>duc</u>tion, ex<u>pan</u>sion, popu<u>la</u>tion, pro<u>duc</u>tion, e<u>mis</u>sions, pol<u>lu</u>tion, con<u>struc</u>tion, concen<u>tra</u>tion, organ<u>iza</u>tion, con<u>sump</u>tion