

Making money from energy saving

WASEDA ENVIRONMENTAL INSTITUTE

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With a strict new Energy Conservation Law here, businesses are working to reduce their carbon footprint. Most large firms are prepared, but many small businesses are worried. How much carbon do they produce? How will they know when they've reduced enough? And just how do you reduce carbon, anyway? These are the questions that the Waseda Environmental Institute (WEI) is happy to answer.

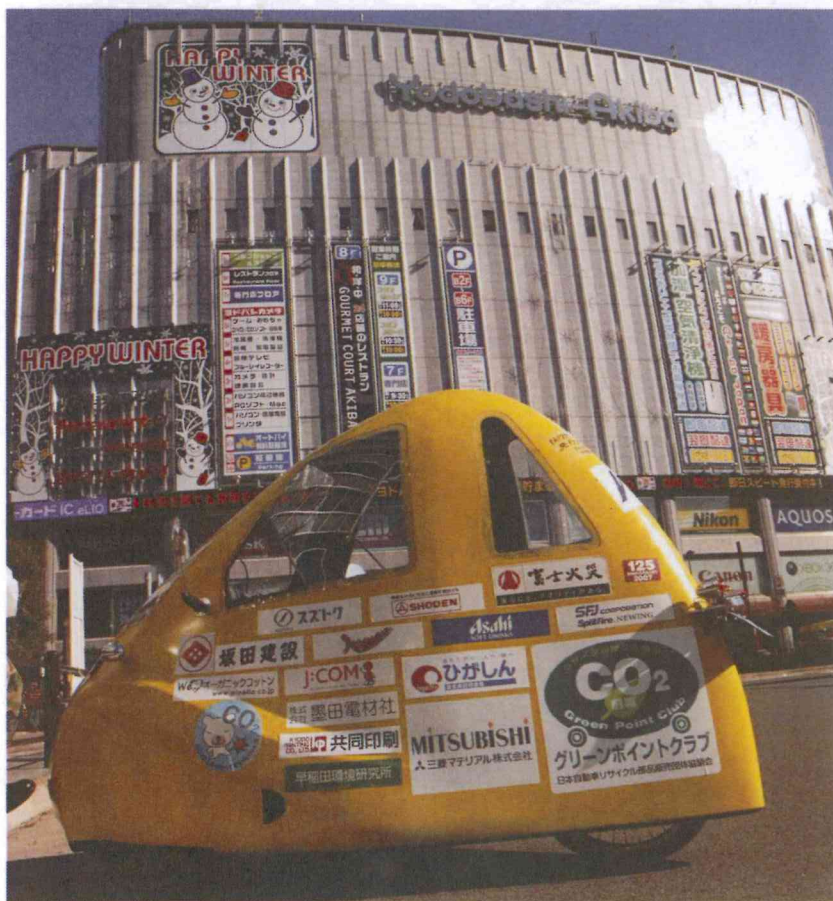
Waseda University Assistant Professor Hiroshi Onoda established WEI while



still a student at the university to spread green technologies developed there, as well as return some profit to both the institu-

tion and, most importantly, society. Onoda describes WEI as a "social-profit organisation."

The company's bread and butter are energy management systems, which measure electricity consumption in offices and factories. Since April this year, companies must report on their efforts to conserve energy and show a schedule for reduction. WEI's clients are mainly small and medium-size companies that lack the knowledge to comply with the new law.



The ultra-light vehicle (ULV), an 80kg single-person battery or fuel-cell powered electric car

"Our service can both reduce a company's carbon footprint and save it a lot of money, typically a 10-20% reduction in its power bill," said Onoda. WEI's fee is a percentage of the savings.

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WEI's home-use version of the service also encourages people to do their part for the environment. It is dubbed "469ma", a phonetic play on the word for polar bear in Japanese, *shirokuma*. Users input their electricity, gasoline use and other data on the Shirokuma Land (469ma.jp) website for an estimate of their home carbon footprint. The service is funded by the government.

WEI was created to market Waseda University-developed products and technologies in as green and sustainable a way as possible. One example is the ultra-light vehicle (ULV), an 80kg single-person battery or fuel-cell powered electric car. "We think there will be diverse needs for 'small mobility', and for this development model in the future," said Onoda. The ULV is good for both the environment and local economies, as its components were designed to be made by small, local parts factories. There are currently two prototypes of the ULV; full release is planned for 2012 to coincide with the opening of the Tokyo Sky Tree in Sumida Ward.

The firm has other ventures ready to go, including a point system for recycled car parts, which would help raise awareness among mechanics and dealers about the negative impact of car parts on the environment.

The future looks good for WEI, as the field of energy management is sure to get bigger. The company has about 30 corporate clients, and Onoda expects a two to three fold jump in earnings this year (from ¥180 million in 2009) due to the new law.