

## Offsets take off

by Amy Westervelt - 4.4.08

Voluntary carbon offsets are becoming increasingly popular for commercial airlines. According to Raphael Bejar, CEO of Paris-based Air Savings, offsets are particularly attractive to small European airlines looking for a way to deal with looming E.U. carbon emissions mandates. His company brings together several small airlines to increase their purchasing power with various suppliers. Now Bejar says because of the pressure to improve environmental performance his company is using its purchasing power to help its smaller airline clients to buy carbon compensation packages and build Web-based tools that allow passengers to purchase offsets for their flights.

Although several U.S. and European airlines offer voluntary carbon offsets, they are typically routed through a third-party site, interrupting travel purchase, or are offered as an afterthought. Bejar says Air Savings partners (so far Atlas Blue and Sky Europe have signed up) had a 2 to 3 percent conversion rate with their carbon offset packages in the first month, due to the fact that the option to offset a flight is placed on the airline's site, in the booking path.

The hope is that offering highly visible offsets will help raise awareness of environmental concerns and prepare passengers for eventual price increases.

"The offsets help prepare passengers and raise awareness that two years from now there will be an extra cost to air travel which will be linked to CO2 compensation," Bejar explains.

