



Written by [Rebecca Terrell](#) on December 10, 2009

UN Claims 2009 Tops Temperature Charts

The United Nations says the past decade is the warmest on record, making the announcement at its Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen on Tuesday. The UN World Meteorological Organization (WMO) accompanied the announcement with a press release claiming temperatures during the past three decades have been steadily increasing. The climate agency expects 2009 will rank among the 10 warmest years since 1850 when researchers began recording data.



The WMO shows temperatures so far this year as much as 0.5°C higher than the annual average in the latter half of the 20th century, with exception made for North America which has experienced cooler-than-average readings in 2009. In many countries, severe drought accompanied this year's warmer temperatures, while intense storms plagued others. The press release also reports Arctic sea ice levels have "declined dramatically over the past 30 years at least."

There are three sources of WMO data, one of which is the Climatic Research Unit (CRU) at the University of East Anglia, also known as the Hadley Centre of the UK Met Office. That facility has made headlines in recent weeks at the center of the [Climategate](#) scandal involving e-mails pirated from a CRU server indicating climate researchers manipulated and concealed data for political and financial gain. The other WMO sources are the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA).

Roy W. Spencer is a former NASA scientist who agrees the Earth is experiencing a warming period but denies it has much to do with human activity. He published on his [blog](#) that climate change is a naturally occurring phenomenon, pointing out glaciers have been retreating for more than 100 years, well before the dawn of the Industrial Age. "A few retreating glaciers are even revealing old tree stumps," he writes. "How did those get there? Planted by skeptics?"

Spencer is one of more than 140 scientists who issued an [Open Letter to the Secretary-General of the United Nations](#) on Tuesday. The letter does not dispute WMO data, but rather challenges the implication that global warming is man-made. The signers say there is "no sound reason to impose expensive and restrictive public policy decisions" when climate science is still a relatively new and unsettled field of study. "It is not the responsibility of 'climate realist' scientists to prove dangerous human-caused climate change is not happening," they posit. "Rather, it is those who propose that it is,



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and promote the allocation of massive investments to solve the supposed 'problem,' who have the obligation to convincingly demonstrate recent climate change is not of mostly natural origin and, if we do nothing, catastrophic change will ensue. To date, this they have utterly failed to do."

These scientists are not alone in their skepticism. A recent [Pew Research Center survey](#) revealed more and more Americans are calling into question the science behind anthropogenic (man-made) global warming (AGW). Thirty-five percent of those polled call global warming a "serious problem," down nine percent from a year and a half ago. Seventeen percent do not see global warming as a problem at all. Americans are even calling into question whether temperatures are really rising. A slim majority of 57 percent now believes there is solid evidence to that effect, compared to 71 percent in April of 2008. However, the survey revealed 50 percent of Americans support setting limits on carbon emissions in the form of [cap-and-trade](#). They may get their wish if legislation currently before the U.S. Senate is approved. Indeed, on Monday the [Environmental Protection Agency](#) (EPA) ruled six greenhouse gases subject to regulation as threats to Americans' health and welfare. And President Obama has [promised Copenhagen delegates](#) that the United States will cut emissions. He is expected to attend the conference, which runs through December 18.

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