



Written by [Jack Kenny](#) on January 14, 2011

Who's Afraid of Global Warming?

Snow and ice had created traffic hazards in the Deep South, the Northeast was being walloped by a blizzard-like storm on Wednesday, and snow was on the ground in every state (even Hawaii) with the single exception of Florida. The time seemed right for another report on global warming.

The year just ended tied 2005 for the hottest on record, according to a report by two federal agencies, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration and the National Ocean and Atmospheric Administration. The timing of the report is ironic, recalling the time a few years ago in New York when a major speech on global warming by former Vice President Al Gore was cancelled because of a snowstorm. And a blizzard greeted the participants of the climate change conference in Copenhagen in 2009.



Old Man Winter's frigid blasts do not disprove global warming, of course, nor does the last year's extremely low winter temperatures in the U.S., along with record snowfalls in a number of locations, including the usually mild climes of Baltimore and Washington, D.C. But they do make you wonder about government and media reports that tend to attribute all sorts of variations in the weather to man-made pollution, in particular those "greenhouse gases" pumped into the atmosphere by industrial and auto emissions. The [New York Times](#), for example, found in the latest reports the baneful effects of global warming behind every natural disaster:

The new figures confirm that 2010 will go down as one of the more remarkable years in the annals of climatology. It featured prodigious snowstorms that broke seasonal records in the United States and Europe; a record-shattering summer heat wave that scorched Russia; strong floods that drove people from their homes in places like Pakistan, Australia, California and Tennessee; a severe die-off of coral reefs; and a continuation in the global trend of a warming climate. David R. Easterling, a scientist at the National Climatic Data Center in Asheville, North Carolina, said the yearly rise in temperatures shows that, "The climate is continuing to show the influence of greenhouse gases."

But those gases make a remarkably clever and resourceful villain if they are responsible for record-breaking heat waves *and* "prodigious snowstorms," along with floods and dying coral reefs. One might think extremes in weather never occurred before factories, coal plants and gas-guzzling automobiles began pumping pollutants into the fragile atmosphere.

"It was the 34th year running that global temperatures have been above the 20th-century average; the last below-average year was 1976," the *Times* noted. "The new figures show that 9 of the 10 warmest years on record have occurred since the beginning of 2001."



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Skepticism about climate change reports has been growing, however, since the “Climategate” scandal of 2009, when leaked e-mails from researchers for the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change at the University of East Anglia showed efforts to suppress contradictory data and shut out scientists with opposing views. Yet Professor Phil Jones, head of the university’s Climactic Research unit, told the British Broadcasting Company last February he agreed “that from 1995 to present time there has been no [statistically significant global warming](#).” How does that square with reports of rising temperatures, year after year for the past third of a century?

Perhaps the answer is in the word “significant.” The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration reports last year’s temperature was 1.12 degrees Fahrenheit warmer than the 20th century average of 57 degrees. So 34 consecutive years of rising temperatures has brought the world to 1.12 degrees above the century’s average — or a sweltering 58.12 degrees Fahrenheit.

The earth’s temperature rose by only .6 degree Celsius from the beginning to the end of the 20th century, indicating that the warming trend was not a constant factor. As the *Times* noted: “The earth has been warming in fits and starts for decades, and a large majority of climatologists say that is because humans are releasing heat-trapping gases like carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. The carbon dioxide level has increased about 40 percent since the Industrial Revolution.”

The 40 percent figure should call into doubt the correlation between the carbon dioxide emissions and the higher temperatures. For while the record-keeping did not begin until 1880, it seems unlikely that the earth’s average temperature was 40 percent cooler at the start of the Industrial Revolution, which began in England around 1760. Indeed, through the middle third of the 20th century, temperatures were dropping year by year and the “climate change” warnings in the 1970s were about a coming “ice age.” *Time* magazine, in its issue of June 24, 1974, said, “the atmosphere has been growing gradually cooler for the past three decades,” while noting that some scientists “think that the cooling trend may be only temporary.”

But why was there a cooling trend at all during those decades? Did factories stop pumping carbon emissions into the air, did power plants stop generating and people stop driving their automobiles during the 40s, 50s and 60s? Did the human race stop clearing forests and building cities and suburbs? By all accounts it was a time of dramatic population growth and expansion of manufacturing, and Detroit was selling more and bigger gas-guzzling cars than ever. Some scientists believe that changes in solar cycles have contributed to the warming trends of more recent decades.

“Changes in the sun’s output of various wavelengths of light have been warming the planet recently, contradicting scientists’ computer models of the solar cycle,” wrote David Biello in the October 7, 2010 issue of [Scientific American](#). While cautioning that “some scientists may have overestimated the sun’s role in climate change,” Biello pointed out that the sun goes from maximum to minimum outputs in 11-year cycles, emitting varying amounts of both ultraviolet and visible light. Satellite measurements have shown that from 2004 to 2007, the declining phase of a prolonged minimum period, the sun put out less ultraviolet and more visible light than expected. “That means the sun, at least for those three years, played a larger role in ongoing climate change than previously thought,” Biello wrote. “The amount of visible radiation entering the lower atmosphere was increasing, which implies warming at the surface,” said atmospheric physicist Joanna Haigh of Imperial College London.

In 2005, data from NASA’s Mars Global Surveyor and Odyssey missions showed “ice caps” near Mars’s south pole had been diminishing for three summers in a row. Habibullo Abdussamatov, head of space research at St. Petersburg’s Pulkovo Astronomical Observatory in Russia, told [National Geographic](#) the



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Mars data is evidence that global warming on Earth is being caused by changes in the sun.

“The long-term increase in solar irradiance is heating both Earth and Mars,” Abdussamatov said. “Man-made greenhouse warming has made a small contribution to the warming seen on Earth in recent years, but it cannot compete with the increase in solar irradiance.”

Unless there are humanoids burning fossil fuels on Mars, the warming discovered on the Red Planet cannot be from man-made causes. But even here on “spaceship earth,” with its roughly six billion passengers, only a small percentage of carbon dioxide enters the atmosphere as a result of human activity. Only 6 billion of the 186 billion tons of CO₂ that enter the earth’s atmosphere each year are from human activity, while 90 billion tons come from the earth’s oceans and another 90 billion from natural phenomena such as volcanoes and decaying plants. Atmospheric physicist James A. Peden is among the scientists skeptical of the theory that man-made carbon emissions entering the atmosphere are trapping heat here below.

“Man-made CO₂ doesn’t appear physically capable of absorbing much more than two-thousandths of the radiated heat passing upward through the atmosphere,” Peden has written. Skeptics also point out that periods of warming have occurred for centuries, predating many of the causes attributed to today’s warming trends.

“What has been forgotten in all the discussion about global warming is a proper sense of history,” noted Philip Stott, professor emeritus of bio-geography at the University of London. The warming period the preceded the “little Ice Age” that descended on Europe around 1300 had a number of environmental benefits, he said, explaining,

During the medieval warm period, the world was warmer even than today, and history shows that it was a wonderful period of plenty for everyone.

Famine and economic ruin accompanied the little Ice Age that followed. When the temperature started to drop, harvests failed and England’s vine industry died.

It makes one wonder why there is so much fear of warmth.



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