

Climate Change: Are Manmade Carbon Dioxide Emissions to Blame?

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Global warming theory posits that manmade carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions are increasing global temperature and that, if not curtailed, such emissions will eventually lead to catastrophic warming. Put another way, global warming theory—called a “theory” because it is not proven by observational science—says that humankind negatively, and potentially catastrophically, alters global climate dynamics.

New data collected from NASA satellites, however, reveal significant errors in the climate models used by the United Nations’ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), which serve as the basis for claims of catastrophic global warming. The IPCC says it is “a scientific intergovernmental body set up by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and by the United Nations Environment Programme.” Massive CO₂-reduction plans are generally predicated upon the IPCC’s reports. However, some question the accuracy of the IPCC’s science.

Dr. Roy Spencer, principal research scientist for The University of Alabama in Huntsville and the U.S. Science Team Leader for the Advanced Microwave Scanning Radiometer on NASA’s Aqua satellite, is one of those critics. He says, “Despite decades of persistent uncertainty over how sensitive the climate system is to increasing concentrations of carbon dioxide from the burning of fossil fuels, we now have new satellite evidence which strongly suggests that the climate system is much less sensitive than is claimed by the U.N.’s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.”¹

Human contribution to atmospheric CO₂ is actually quite small. Spencer says pre-industrial atmospheric levels of carbon dioxide were 270 parts per million (ppm), while today’s levels are around 385 or 390 ppm, even less than during previous periods in our earth’s history.² Thus, about 39 out of every 100,000 molecules of air are CO₂, but humans con-

tribute just 5 percent of total CO₂. Moreover, it takes five years to go from 39 molecules of CO₂ to 40 molecules, as nature absorbs about 50 percent of man’s CO₂ emissions.³

The IPCC’s models overestimate warming by overstating CO₂’s effect on clouds. In other words, climate models overestimate climate sensitivity. Spencer says, “the failure to account for natural, chaotic cloud variability generated internal to the climate system will always lead to the illusion of a climate system which appears more sensitive than it really is.”⁴

On the other hand, satellite measurements reveal low climate sensitivity. According to Spencer, “The major climate models used by global warming advocates all assume a far greater sensitivity to atmospheric carbon dioxide changes than what we observe in the empirical satellite data. That’s why all of these scenarios produce such outlandishly high forecasts about future global temperatures.”

Spencer suggests that manmade-global-warming proponents confuse cause and effect: “Al Gore’s apocalyptic temperature scenario assumes that carbon dioxide causes temperature changes. Except there is one problem—global temperatures precede carbon dioxide levels by approximately 800 years. Ice core data reveals the opposite of what Gore claims.” Geologist Don Easterbrook’s research of warming and cooling trends over the past four centuries shows almost “no correlation at all with CO₂.”⁵

Spencer concludes that (1) satellite data plus a simple climate model suggest that the climate system is driven more by natural cloud changes than by manmade CO₂, and (2) the IPCC “Scientific Consensus” of a manmade CO₂-driven climate is due to a mix-up between cause and effect, when observing natural cloud fluctuations.

Spencer's findings are significant, considering that the IPCC's climate models focus on manmade CO₂ emissions and not natural factors that could influence climate. "This is an issue on which the IPCC has remained almost entirely silent," says Spencer. "There has been virtually no published work on the possible role of internal climate variations in the warming of the last century... And given that virtually no research into possible natural explanations for global warming has been performed, it is time for scientific objectivity and integrity to be restored to the field of global warming research."⁶

Spencer's satellite measurements, though covering just five years, make a critical contribution to the climate debate, as they accentuate the prematurity of Lieberman-Warner-type climate regulations—whose potential economic costs are unprecedented. Spencer's observational findings are a needed check against the IPCC models' unrealized climate projections and offer a dose of the scientific objectivity that is sorely needed in climate change debates.

With Spencer's findings in mind, policymakers should be guided by four main questions:

1. What is the actual, observed evidence for manmade global warming?
2. How much cooling, if any, will carbon-reduction schemes yield?
3. Do the benefits of proposed carbon-reduction plans exceed the costs they impose on Texas consumers and the economy?
4. Will carbon-reduction plans permit Texas to produce enough energy to power its future economic growth?

For a more thorough examination of these issues, see Dr. Spencer's *New York Times* bestseller, *Climate Confusion*. ★

ENDNOTES

¹ Dr. Roy W. Spencer, Testimony before the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee (22 July 2008) http://epw.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?FuseAction=Files.View&FileStore_id=e12b56cb-4c7b-4c21-bd4a-7afbc4ee72f3.

² Large greenhouses contain up to 1,000 ppm. See "Roy Spencer, climate skeptic, speaks," Eric Berger, SciGuy, *chron.com* (7 Oct. 2008) http://blogs.chron.com/sciguy/archives/2008/10/post_55.html.

³ Presentation, Dr. Roy W. Spencer, Houston, Texas (7 Oct. 2008). According to the National Center for Policy Analysis, CO₂ makes up 3.62% of all greenhouse gases—greenhouse gases comprise no more than 5% of the atmosphere—and just 3.4% of CO₂ is manmade. Thus, the human contribution to the greenhouse effect is 0.28%, while ocean/plant activity and water vapor are responsible for 4.72% and 95% of the greenhouse effect, respectively. "A Global Warming Primer," National Center for Policy Analysis, <http://www.ncpa.org/globalwarming/GlobalWarmingPrimer.pdf>. Analytical chemist Michael J. Myers finds that manmade CO₂ "equals about 0.0168% of the atmosphere's CO₂ concentration... This results in a 0.00064% increase in the absorption of the sun's radiation. This is an insignificantly small number. The yearly increase is many orders of magnitude smaller than the standard deviation errors for CO₂ concentration measurement." "Numbers don't add up for global warming," Michael J. Myers, *The Island Packet* (25 Sept. 2008) <http://www.islandpacket.com/opinion/letters/story/620301.html>.

⁴ Dr. Roy W. Spencer, Testimony before the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee (22 July 2008) http://epw.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?FuseAction=Files.View&FileStore_id=e12b56cb-4c7b-4c21-bd4a-7afbc4ee72f3.

⁵ "Skeptics, unite!" Lorne Gunter, *National Post* (20 Oct. 2008) <http://www.nationalpost.com/opinion/story.html?id=bee2f7de-cb35-4f3d-9652-48c97f8ae623>.

⁶ Dr. Roy W. Spencer, Testimony before the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee (22 July 2008) http://epw.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?FuseAction=Files.View&FileStore_id=e12b56cb-4c7b-4c21-bd4a-7afbc4ee72f3.

