

Greenhouse Gases Rise by Record Amount

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The global output of heat-trapping carbon dioxide has jumped by a record amount, according to the US department of energy, a sign of how feeble the world's efforts are at slowing man-made global warming.

The figures for 2010 mean that levels of greenhouse gases are higher than the worst case scenario outlined by climate experts just four years ago.

"The more we talk about the need to control emissions, the more they are growing," said John Reilly, the co-director of MIT's Joint Program on the Science and Policy of Global Change.

The world pumped about 564m more tons (512m metric tons) of carbon into the air in 2010 than it did in 2009, an increase of 6%. That amount of extra pollution eclipses the individual emissions of all but three countries, China, the US and India, the world's top producers of greenhouse gases.

It is a "monster" increase that is unheard of, said Gregg Marland, a professor of geology at Appalachian State University, who has helped calculate department of energy figures in the past.

Extra pollution in China and the US account for more than half the increase in emissions last year, Marland said.

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"It's a big jump," said Tom Boden, the director of the energy department's Carbon Dioxide Information Analysis Center at Oak Ridge National Lab. "From an emissions standpoint, the global financial crisis seems to be over."

Boden said that in 2010 people were travelling, and manufacturing was back up worldwide, spurring the use of fossil fuels, the chief contributor of man-made [climate change](#).

India and China are huge users of coal. Burning coal is the biggest carbon source worldwide and emissions from that jumped nearly 8% in 2010.

"The good news is that these economies are growing rapidly so everyone ought to be for that, right?" Reilly said. "Broader economic improvements in poor countries has been bringing living improvements to people. Doing it with increasing reliance on coal is imperiling the world."

In 2007, when the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change issued its last large report on global warming, it used different scenarios for carbon dioxide pollution and said the rate of warming would be based on the rate of pollution. Boden said the latest figures put global emissions higher than the worst case projections from the climate panel. Those forecast global temperatures rising between 4 and 11 degrees Fahrenheit (2.4-6.4 Celsius) by the end of the century with the best estimate at 7.5 degrees (4 Celsius).

Even though global warming sceptics have criticised the climate change panel as being too alarmist, scientists have generally found their predictions too conservative, Reilly said. He said his university worked on emissions scenarios, their likelihood, and what would happen. The IPCC's worst case scenario was only about in the middle of what MIT calculated are likely scenarios.

Chris Field of Stanford University, head of one of the IPCC's working groups, said the panel's emissions scenarios are intended to be more accurate in the long term and are less so in earlier years. He said the question now among scientists is whether the future is the panel's worst case scenario "or something more extreme".

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"Really dismaying," Granger Morgan, head of the engineering and public policy department at Carnegie Mellon University, said of the new figures. "We are building up a horrible legacy for our children and grandchildren."

But Reilly and University of Victoria climate scientist Andrew Weaver found something good in recent emissions figures. The developed countries that ratified the 1997 Kyoto Protocol greenhouse gas limiting treaty have reduced their emissions overall since then and have achieved their goals of cutting emissions to about 8% below 1990 levels. The US did not ratify the agreement.

In 1990, developed countries produced about 60% of the world's greenhouse gases, now it's probably less than 50%, Reilly said.

"We really need to get the developing world because if we don't, the problem is going to be running away from us," Weaver said. "And the problem is pretty close from running away from us."

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