

Global Warming: A Global Concern

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Covering approximately 71% of the earth's surface, the ocean is the most important geographical characteristic of the planet. In one way, or another, the ocean has influenced the course of human events, serving as a major source of food, travel, and commerce. There simply is no denying its impact. To the average person, it may seem as if everything is fine. But with each passing day the oceans as well as the earth slowly suffer from a silent killer, global warming. From tornadoes to hurricanes, to droughts and heat waves, there is no running from this problem, a problem that should be a priority for everyone on the planet.

The planet is a perfectly balanced system; a constantly growing and interacting organism. The advent of global warming is disrupting this system. The average surface temperature of earth has increased more than 1 degree Fahrenheit since 1900 and the rate of warming has been nearly three times the century-long average since 1970 (Global Warming Science). The earth, being the fragile entity that it is, cannot continue to bear such dramatic change. Almost all experts studying the recent climate history of the earth agree now that human causes, mainly the intentional release of heat-trapping gases from industrial smokestacks, tailpipes, and burning forests, are probably the dominant force driving the trend. The gases add to the planet's natural greenhouse effect, allowing sunlight in, but preventing some of the resulting heat from radiating back to space. Drawing on research on past climate shifts, observations of current conditions, and computer simulations, many climate experts say that without big curbs in greenhouse gas emissions, the 21st century could see temperatures rise three to eight degrees, weather patterns sharply shift, ice sheets shrink and seas rise several feet.

The earth should be its inhabitant's first priority. And the changes made in each community, state, and region, can all impact the way the world thinks. In the United States, approximately 6.6 tons (almost 15,000 pounds carbon equivalent) of greenhouse gases are emitted per person every year. And emissions per person have increased about 3.4% between 1990 and 1997. Most of these emissions, about 82%, are from burning fossil fuels to generate electricity to power cars. The remaining emissions are from methane from wastes in landfills, raising livestock, natural gas pipelines, and coal, as well as from industrial chemicals and other sources (Global Warming Emissions). It is imperative that one keep in mind that these emission figures vary based on the country and state in which you live. Unfortunately, the United States emits more greenhouse gasses per person than any other country. Clearly, figures as dramatic as these should be used as fuel for change.

Global warming is a problem that all must face head on. And with a little effort, human beings can make a difference, even by changing little things in daily routines. As a responsible individual, there are three areas where a person can make the most impact in reducing these earth killing carbon emissions – the electrical used on a daily basis, the amount of waste produced, and the methods of transportation chosen.

Hopefully, such changes in lifestyle will become influences, and raise awareness to the issue of global warming. It's everyone's responsibility to ensure that future generations have a healthy planet to call home.

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