

EPA: United States Environmental Protection Agency

[A-Z index](#)

News Releases from Headquarters

EPA: Greenhouse Gases Threaten Public Health and the Environment / Science overwhelmingly shows greenhouse gas concentrations at unprecedented levels due to human activity

Release date: 12/07/2009

Contact Information: Cathy Milbourn, Milbourn.cathy@epa.gov, 202-564-7849, 202-564-4355; En español: Lina Younes, younes.lina@epa.gov, 202-564-9924, 202-564-4355

EPA: Greenhouse Gases Threaten Public Health and the Environment

Science overwhelmingly shows greenhouse gas concentrations at unprecedented levels due to human activity

WASHINGTON – After a thorough examination of the scientific evidence and careful consideration of public comments, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced today that greenhouse gases (GHGs) threaten the public health and welfare of the American people. EPA also finds that GHG emissions from on-road vehicles contribute to that threat.

GHGs are the primary driver of climate change, which can lead to hotter, longer heat waves that threaten the health of the sick, poor or elderly;

increases in ground-level ozone pollution linked to asthma and other respiratory illnesses; as well as other threats to the health and welfare of Americans.

“These long-overdue findings cement 2009’s place in history as the year when the United States Government began addressing the challenge of greenhouse-gas pollution and seizing the opportunity of clean-energy reform,” said EPA Administrator Lisa P. Jackson. “Business leaders, security experts, government officials, concerned citizens and the United States Supreme Court have called for enduring, pragmatic solutions to reduce the greenhouse gas pollution that is causing climate change. This continues our work towards clean energy reform that will cut GHGs and reduce the dependence on foreign oil that threatens our national security and our economy.”

EPA’s final findings respond to the 2007 U.S. Supreme Court decision that GHGs fit within the Clean Air Act definition of air pollutants. The findings do not in and of themselves impose any emission reduction requirements but rather allow EPA to finalize the GHG standards proposed earlier this year for new light-duty vehicles as part of the joint rulemaking with the Department of Transportation.

On-road vehicles contribute more than 23 percent of total U.S. GHG emissions. EPA’s proposed GHG standards for light-duty vehicles, a subset of on-road vehicles, would reduce GHG emissions by nearly 950 million metric tons and conserve 1.8 billion barrels of oil over the lifetime of model year 2012-2016 vehicles.

EPA’s endangerment finding covers emissions of six key greenhouse gases – carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide, hydrofluorocarbons, perfluorocarbons and sulfur hexafluoride – that have been the subject of scrutiny and intense analysis for decades by scientists in the United States and around the world.

Scientific consensus shows that as a result of human activities, GHG concentrations in the atmosphere are at record high levels and data shows that the Earth has been warming over the past 100 years, with the steepest increase in warming in recent decades. The evidence of human-induced climate change goes beyond observed increases in average surface temperatures; it includes melting ice in the Arctic, melting glaciers around the world, increasing ocean temperatures, rising sea levels, acidification of the oceans due to excess carbon dioxide, changing precipitation patterns, and



**Speaker: Lisa P. Jackson
EPA Administrator**

Sound bite 1 (MP3, 0:11 secs, 360 KB)

Transcript: Today, EPA announced that greenhouse gases threaten the health and welfare of the American people. We also found that greenhouse gas emissions from on-road vehicles contribute to that threat.

Sound bite 2 (MP3, 0:15 secs, 500 KB)

Transcript: The accumulation of CO2 and other greenhouse gases in the atmosphere can lead to hotter, longer heat waves that threaten the health of the sick, the poor, the elderly - that can increase ground-level ozone pollution linked to asthma and other respiratory illnesses.

Sound bite 3 (MP3, 0:15 secs, 500 KB)

Transcript: Today’s announcement, on its own, does not impose any new requirements on industry. But, today’s announcement is the prerequisite for strong new emissions standards for cars and trucks: the ones the president announced last spring.

Sound bite 4 (MP3, 0:22 secs, 700 KB)

Transcript: Today’s finding is based on decades of research by hundreds of researchers. The vast body of evidence not only remains unassailable, it’s grown stronger, and it points to one conclusion:

changing patterns of ecosystems and wildlife.

President Obama and Administrator Jackson have publicly stated that they support a legislative solution to the problem of climate change and Congress' efforts to pass comprehensive climate legislation. However, climate change is threatening public health and welfare, and it is critical that EPA fulfill its obligation to respond to the 2007 U.S. Supreme Court ruling that determined that greenhouse gases fit within the Clean Air Act definition of air pollutants.

EPA issued the proposed findings in April 2009 and held a 60-day public comment period. The agency received more than 380,000 comments, which were carefully reviewed and considered during the development of the final findings.

Information on EPA's findings: <http://www.epa.gov/climatechange/endangerment.html>

 [Search This Collection](#) | [Search All Collections](#)

Recent additions

- 12/10/2009 [Largest Environmental Bankruptcy in U.S. History Will Result in Payment of \\$1.79 Billion towards Environmental Cleanup and Restoration](#)
[Largest recovery of money for hazardous waste clean up ever](#)
- 12/10/2009 [Limited EPA Study Finds Low Level of Concern in Samples of Recycled Tires from Ballfield and Playground Surfaces](#)
- 12/10/2009 [Federal Officials to Hold Conference Call to Discuss Largest Environmental Bankruptcy in U.S. History](#)
- 12/10/2009 [EPA Releases Final Specification for WaterSense New Homes: This will help homeowners increase water efficiency and save on their utility bills](#)
- 12/09/2009 [EPA's Energy Star Buildings Mark a Decade of Savings: Oldest, tallest, largest buildings named](#)