

Blacksburg Cool Cities Press Conference

Good Morning. Welcome to the Cool Cities press conference for Blacksburg. I am David Roper. Thank you for coming.

We are fortunate that we live in a beautiful town with a mayor, town council, businesses and citizens that have been making efforts to reduce their emissions of Global-Warming gases. Today we citizens of Blacksburg celebrate the commitment of the Town of Blacksburg to take further steps to reduce those emissions in the town's operations.

Global Warming may be one of the greatest challenges that has faced humans in the last 10,000 years. A major impediment to public realization of the eventual effects of putting Global-Warming gases into the atmosphere is the large time delay of the resulting Global Warming. By the time humans realize the problem it is almost too late for making changes.

Global Warming is mainly due to our insertion of the greenhouse gas carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. Until recently, for the last 100,000 years it never exceeded a concentration of 275 parts per million. Now it is 383 parts per million and is rising 2% a year, and the increase is rising.

If we continue putting carbon dioxide into the atmosphere at the increasing rate that we are now doing, the concentration will reach 480 parts per million by 2050 and 670 parts per million by 2100, more than twice what it has been for the last million years and higher than for the last 20 million years.

We do not have data about what such large amounts of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere will do to our Earth's environment. Certainly it will make it hotter, at least for a while. It might trigger even more disastrous events, such as a much colder climate leading into the next 100,000-year ice age. We are recklessly gambling with our descendants' future, some think even condemning it.

The second main cause of Global Warming is our insertion of the greenhouse gas methane into the atmosphere, a much more potent greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide. Until recently, it never exceeded about 670 parts per billion over the last 100,000 years. Now it is at 1,783 parts per billion.

The good news is that methane concentration appears to be leveling off and its concentration will be much easier to bring down than for carbon dioxide. This is because it lingers in the atmosphere for only about 10 years, instead of the 100-year life time of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, and because it is not released when we burn petroleum and coal.

The bad news is that the mechanism for the decrease of methane with time is that it is converted to carbon dioxide and water vapor, both potent greenhouse gases! Even worse news is that Global Warming is melting the permafrost in the Arctic, which is causing release of its huge amounts of trapped methane, which may cause another concentration increase.

We must **start now** a **major effort** to reduce the emissions of Global-Warming gases into our atmosphere. Cool Cities is a coalition of nearly 400 cities and towns that are consciously and quickly

changing the way they operate to mitigate Global Warming. Let's begin to make Blacksburg a "Cool City."

The Cool Cities campaign is organized by the Sierra Club and is based on the U.S. Mayors Climate Protection Agreement, which you can read at the Global-Warming display table.

It is my pleasure to introduce David Bernard, Chair of the New River Group of the Virginia Chapter of the Sierra Club, who will tell you about the Cool Cities campaign.

[David Bernard describes the Cool Cities Campaign and presents the plaque to the Mayor.]

[Mayor Ron Rordam gives speech about Blacksburg's past and future efforts to mitigate Global Warming and recognizes other Blacksburg Town Council members.]

A young man in Blacksburg, an engineering graduate of Virginia Tech, has been involved in many aspects of improving the environment of Blacksburg and Virginia. He has helped organize several environmental groups in Blacksburg, the latest of which is the Biodiesel Cooperative. He was instrumental in getting Cool-Cities designation for Blacksburg. It is my pleasure to introduce Aaron Barr.

[Aaron Barr gives speech about what Blacksburg citizens and businesses can do to mitigate Global Warming.]

What must the Town of Blacksburg do next? The first step is to do an inventory of Global-Warming gases emissions for 2006 and earlier years, so that we can compare the emissions this year and the following years to check if we are meeting our goals.

In becoming a Cool City, the Town of Blacksburg has committed itself to reducing Global-Warming gases emissions by a certain amount. That reduction goal is just the first step. I predict that in a few years the Town will greatly increase the reduction goal.

Some actions of the Town of Blacksburg to reduce Global-Warming gases emissions will save money right away. Some actions will save money soon after started. Some will save money in a few years after started. And some will never save money; they will only save the lives of many humans and reduce environmental degradation.

I have a suggestion for the Town of Blacksburg regarding how to handle the money-saving situation: Set aside at least half of the money saved by doing the easy actions, to finance those needed actions that do not save money so quickly or that actually cost money.

And I have a suggestion for each of you as citizens or business people: Do a carbon-dioxide inventory of your home or business, similar to the one on the back of the handout given to you. And then start a program to reduce those emissions in the years ahead, including investing in renewable energy either at your home or business or in other businesses. Then you will be a part of Cool Blacksburg.

A future Cool Blacksburg event will be a rally in Blacksburg as part of an international rally day, called Step It Up, on the 14th of April, calling for reducing Global-Warming gases emissions to 80% below current levels by 2050.

Thank you Mayor Rordam and the Blacksburg Town Council for making this day possible. And thanks go to many citizens of Cool Blacksburg for their support of Cool Cities for Blacksburg, including helping organize this press conference, especially to Aaron Barr. And thanks to Gail Billingsly, the Executive Director of the Virginia Tech YMCA, for arranging for the use of this facility.

I hope that you will look at the display tables and talk to the owners of hybrid and biodiesel vehicles outside as you leave. **Let's get to work reducing Global Warming!** Thank you for coming.

The speakers would be glad to take any questions from the press.

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