# US government shifts climate data handling amid rising carbon dioxide levels



A significant shift in the handling of climate data by the US government has raised concerns within the scientific community and beyond, highlighting the broader political backdrop shaping climate science in the country. Recent developments reveal a sharp departure from traditional transparency and commentary on key climate metrics by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (Noaa), alongside efforts by international research institutes to safeguard critical environmental data.

In a break from established practice, the Biden administration's predecessor, the Trump administration, recently released information related to carbon dioxide (CO₂) concentrations in the Earth's atmosphere without accompanying analysis or public commentary, despite record-breaking increases. The global average surface concentration of CO₂ in 2023 reached 422.7 parts per million (ppm), a stark rise from pre-industrial levels of 280 ppm. The year-on-year increase was 3.7 ppm—the largest ever recorded—surpassing the previous record jump of 2.9 ppm in 2015. These figures, which have been meticulously tracked since 1958, underline a relentless upward trend in greenhouse gases, further entrenching the challenge of limiting global temperature increases in line with international targets such as those set out in the Paris Agreement.

Traditionally, Noaa would disseminate this critical data through well-publicised press releases and expert briefings, providing context to help policymakers and the public understand the implications for climate change and environmental policy. However, this year the agency's disclosures were limited to minimalist updates posted on social media platforms Facebook and X, with no press events or explanations, as noted by Scientific American. This change in communication strategy coincides with broader governmental scepticism and minimisation of climate change threats, exemplified by the administration’s withdrawal from the Paris climate accord.

The diminishing role of Noaa in climate science extends beyond communication. The agency's Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research, pivotal to US climate and weather research, faces severe cuts. These reductions threaten not only climate monitoring but also the agency’s capacity to deliver crucial early warning systems for extreme weather events such as tornadoes and hurricanes. The potential impact extends into public safety and preparedness, given Noaa’s historical role in providing timely and authoritative information.

Compounding these challenges is the uncertainty surrounding the availability of climate data hosted online by the US government. Reports from Nature indicate that the Trump administration planned to terminate contracts underpinning the hosting of key climate datasets on public platforms. This move prompted an urgent response from European research organisations, particularly in Germany, including the Helmholtz Association of German Research Centres and the Pangaea environmental data repository, which have joined forces to back up and preserve these invaluable datasets. Similar preservation efforts are underway in Canada and other countries, reflecting concerns over the potential loss of publicly accessible scientific data.

The evolving situation recalls previous landmark moments in environmental science where data played a crucial role in shaping global action. For instance, in the early 1980s, researchers at the British Antarctic Survey identified a significant depletion in stratospheric ozone over Antarctica, leading to the Montreal Protocol of 1987—a robust international agreement to phase out ozone-depleting substances. According to Nasa, the ozone layer is expected to recover fully by 2066, demonstrating the effective interface between science, policy, and environmental stewardship.

The current undermining of US climate data infrastructure and communication marks a distinctive moment in the governance of environmental science. The integrity and accessibility of climate information remain essential for understanding ongoing changes in the Earth’s atmosphere and for informing responses to emerging risks associated with global warming. The Financial Times is reporting on these developments, highlighting a growing international effort to ensure continuity of data that underpins climate research and policy worldwide.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.ft.com/content/9ac531e7-332d-44c6-9cdf-6b6cd94601b3> - This article discusses the Trump administration's suppression and downplaying of critical climate data, including the failure to highlight a record 3.7 ppm annual increase in atmospheric CO₂ in 2024, surpassing the previous record set in 2015.
* <https://apnews.com/article/94424de6b22f1f734b1afd6bce8489b2> - This report details the record-high levels of carbon dioxide and methane in 2023, with CO₂ reaching 419.3 ppm, an increase of over 50% from pre-industrial times, as reported by NOAA.
* <https://apnews.com/article/6fa3a7b8f2a7cd5854bda6a419de664c> - This article highlights the consistent setting of new global temperature records, with the European Union's Copernicus declaring May as the hottest on record for the 12th consecutive month, and discusses the implications of surpassing the 1.5 degrees Celsius warming limit of the Paris Agreement.
* <https://www.lemonde.fr/en/environment/article/2024/05/15/summer-2023-was-the-hottest-in-the-northern-hemisphere-for-two-thousand-years_6671498_114.html> - This study published in Nature confirms that the summer of 2023 in the northern hemisphere was the hottest in 2000 years, with average temperatures exceeding the pre-industrial era average by more than 2°C, attributed to human greenhouse gas emissions combined with the El Niño phenomenon.
* <https://www.axios.com/newsletters/axios-generate-0f973100-2413-11ef-8f9d-236c9a50641d> - This article discusses the League of Conservation Voters' promotion of President Biden's Arctic anti-drilling efforts through a $2.6 million digital ad campaign, highlighting the significance of energy policies in the current political landscape.
* <https://www.ft.com/content/9ac531e7-332d-44c6-9cdf-6b6cd94601b3> - This article also covers the significant cutbacks at NOAA, including layoffs and cancellations of climate data hosting contracts, which jeopardize crucial climate and weather monitoring capabilities.
* <https://www.ft.com/content/9ac531e7-332d-44c6-9cdf-6b6cd94601b3> - Please view link - unable to able to access data