

Just as significant, according to experts, is the fact that the hole appears to be widening earlier in the year than it used to.

The data is from Sept. 3, 2000 - representing an unprecedented drop in ozone readings several weeks before the usual decline.

Comparing ozone level measurements is difficult because readings fluctuate so much. Wind speed and temperature play a big part.

Antarctic ozone levels normally begin going down in July, when sunlight triggers chemical reactions in frigid air trapped during the South Pole's winter. The decrease intensifies in August and September before slowing in October as temperatures rise in that part of the world.

Levels have never plummeted this far this fast. Many experts think the drop is tied to extremely cold weather at the South Pole recently. The largest hole previously recorded was 27.2 million square kilometres on Sept. 19, 1998.

Some scientists have speculated we may be witnessing major climate change in the stratosphere, although they point out that more data is needed to draw definite conclusions.

It's believed that synthetic chlorine compounds, such as refrigerants, aerosol sprays, solvents, and some fire-fighting products, cause most ozone depletion.

But fewer of these chemicals are now being used, according to countries that have agreed to stricter environmental rules. Scientists hope the ozone layer will eventually begin to recover substantially over the next few decades. **Source:** Envirolink, 10 Sep 2000 <http://envirolink.netforchange.com/frame.html>

3. Gov't Blacklists Bad Refrigerants

Uganda is to phase out refrigerants that use ozone-destroying substances, the National Environment Management Authority has said, reports John Eremu. In a statement commemorating the International Ozone Layer Day marked on Saturday, the authority said Uganda consumes 42 metric tonnes of Ozone Depleting Substances (ODS) annually.

It said 98% of the ODS is used in refrigeration and air-conditioning and the remainder in cut-flower industry and fire extinguishers. Although Uganda does not manufacture the harmful substances, NEMA said it was a net importer of the appliances banned or being recycled in their countries of origin.

The authority said a national programme to recover and recycle the refrigerants had been established and that training of technicians and engineers in the recovery and recycling of the ozone-destroying refrigerants was going on at the Nakawa Vocational Training Institute. Robert Wabunoha, the NEMA public relations officer, signed the statement. **Source:** 20/9/2000, <http://allafrica.com/stories/200009200038.html>

4. Why We'll Probably Be Too Late to Save the Planet

Growth in the ozone hole despite 13 years of limiting CFCs suggests that pollution curbs take decades to have any effect

When it comes to the environment, the good news is that we are more aware of the effects of our behavior than we were a few decades ago. The bad news is that even once global warming reaches crisis proportions too difficult for U.S. leaders to ignore, any corrective measures we then allow them to take may well take several more decades to make any difference.

New studies in recent weeks have documented the warming of the planet through the shortening of winters over centuries, while anecdotal evidence of the absence of pack ice at the normally frozen North Pole underscores the sense that the planet may now be undergoing a more rapid warming process that could have catastrophic climatic effect. NASA's revelation Thursday that the hole in the ozone layer is continuing to grow, however, may be a chilling warning about the pace of environmental damage. After all, an international treaty curbing outputs of the chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) and other pollutants that gnaw away at the gaseous layer that protects our planet from harmful radiation has been in force since 1987. NASA scientists point out the hole may be continuing to grow because, despite the sharp cutbacks that took effect more than a decade ago, the concentration of the offending gases in the stratosphere may only now be reaching its peak. By extension, it may take decades before we feel the full impact of whatever damage we're doing to the Earth's climate system right now - and that time-delay may make it even more difficult politically for the world's leaders to take the steps they deem necessary to avert a climate-change catastrophe.

The U.S. is the 500-pound gorilla of atmospheric pollution on the planet, accounting for the more than a quarter of the world's total output of carbon gases. But although President Clinton signed the 1997 Kyoto Accord committing the U.S. to cut its output levels to 5.2 percent below the 1990 levels by the year 2010, he hasn't dared send it to Capitol Hill. (And without curbs, the government's Energy Information Agency estimates, U.S. carbon gas outputs will actually grow by 33 percent over the present decade.) Republican presidential candidate George W. Bush is resolutely opposed to adopting the Kyoto targets, and while Al Gore

helped negotiate the treaty, he's shown little inclination to press for its ratification, which would face almost certain defeat in the Senate. After all, Americans are already blanching at having to pay almost \$2 a gallon for gasoline, but in order to reach the Kyoto targets the pump price might have to be even higher in order to discourage consumption and prompt the auto industry to shift its emphasis away from gas-guzzling SUVs and toward more fuel-efficient vehicles. Slashing carbon gas outputs will ultimately demand lifestyle changes in America, but no politician wants to be the bearer of bad tidings. Which means that if the worst fears of environmentalists prove true, it may be decades too late by the time we're prepared to change our ways. **Source:** Time Daily, 8 September 2000, <<http://www.time.com/time/daily/0,2960,54343,00.html>>



United Nations Environment Programme Division of Technology, Industry, and Economics (UNEP DTIE) OzonAction Programme is providing OzoNews as an internal information service to keep UNEP DTIE staff informed on current ozone depletion & related issues, to promote information exchange and stimulate discussion about ozone protection. The views expressed in articles written by external authors are the viewpoints of those authors and do not necessarily represent the policy or viewpoint of UNEP. Additionally, the citing of commercial products or services does not constitute endorsement of those products or services by UNEP.

Prepared by: Samira de Gobert, Public Information Assistant
Reviewer: Jim Curlin, Information Officer

If you have questions, comments, ideas for future articles, or you want to discontinue receiving this update, please contact: Mrs. Samira de Gobert, Tel. 0144371452 Email: sami.degobert@unep.fr