OZONEWS

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1- Goodbye, Hole in the Sky

Scientists are quietly celebrating some good news about the global environment. Two studies published this week suggest that international action to protect the ozone layer in the upper atmosphere is working. Atmospheric levels of ozone-destroying chemicals, which are being phased out by the 1987 Montreal protocol, are beginning to fall. And researchers predict that the ozone hole may have healed itself completely within 50 years … Paul Fraser, chief atmospheric scientist with the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation, is delighted. "This is big news. We have been waiting for this," he says … Although the Montreal protocol is hailed today - in the words of Klaus Toepfer, UNEP executive director - as "a success story of which we can all be proud", there are still concerns about its effectiveness. One problem concerns the illegal trade in banned chemicals. Since millions of CFC-dependent refrigerators, air-conditioners and other equipment are still in use around the world, criminals have an incentive to smuggle CFCs across borders. Another threat comes from a range of new chemicals, used in a range of applications including fire extinguishers and cleaning fluids, that have some potential to damage the ozone layer, though they are less dangerous than CFCs. A big uncertainty is the complex interplay between climate change and ozone depletion. Global warming at the earth's surface may be accompanied by cooling in the upper atmosphere, which would accelerate the chemical processes that lead to ozone depletion … This success has stiffened the resolve of the international negotiators who are attempting to create an effective regime to tackle global warming. Admittedly, the problem of climate change is far more complicated and extensive than ozone depletion. Whereas the main impact of the Montreal protocol was felt by a relatively small number of industries, notably chemicals and refrigeration, the attempt to curb greenhouse gas emissions will have an impact on vast numbers of individuals and businesses. Yet the scientists and policymakers involved in the Montreal protocol are convinced that it offers wider lessons. In the view of Dr Fraser, the latest findings on the ozone hole underline the difference that the inter- national community can make to environmental issues. "This shows global protocols can work," he says ...
Article @:
http://news.ft.com/servlet/ContentServer?pagename=FT.com/StoryFT/FullStory&c=StoryFT&cid=1031119528061
Source: The Financial Times Com, By Vanessa Holden and Clive Cooksen, 20 September 2002

2- Tierra del Fuego Residents Get An Extra Dose of Solar Radiation (Chile)

The size of the hole in the Earth's stratospheric ozone layer has stabilised, but scientists and environmentalists warn that the danger persists, evidenced by the fact that the 100,000 residents of Argentina's Tierra del Fuego province have been exposed to excessive solar radiation this week. On the eve of the International Day for the Preservation of the Ozone Layer, Sep 16, the people of Tierra del Fuego were the world's most exposed population to the sun's harmful ultraviolet (UV) rays, as the hole in this natural atmospheric shield was located this week over the far southern province … "We in Tierra del Fuego have known for a long time that we have to be extremely cautious about exposure, but we live in an area where the sun is mostly absent. And when it does appear, it is sometimes hard to remember the danger and avoid going outside," Graciela Fuchs, a schoolteacher in the town of Rio Grande, told IPS … The Argentine air force's Global Atmospheric Monitoring Station reported that during the two days of extreme risk in Tierra del Fuego, the Dobson units measurement, which indicates the thickness of the ozone layer, descended from the normal level of 300 to less than 200. Health officials have urged the residents of Tierra del Fuego, who are known in Spanish as 'fueginos', to remain inside from 11:00 am to 3:00 pm local time, and to wear caps with visors and to use sun-blocking creams on exposed skin when outside. Since 1980, scientists have observed a dramatic cyclical thinning of the ozone layer over Antarctica, usually lasting from August to December each year. … Emiliano

Ezcurra, environmental activist with the Argentine office of Greenpeace International, told IPS he thinks the problem now is that the public believes the ozone hole was cured with the signing of the Montreal Protocol. "Our work is not yet done, and we run the risk that the Montreal Protocol could be weakened after having served as a valuable tool for achieving important successes," Ezcurra said …
Article @: http://www.spacedaily.com/news/ozone-02j.html
Source: Space Daily, Tierra Daily, Buenos Aires (IPS), 16 September 2002, By Marcela Valente

3- Cuba Works to Phase Out Use of Methyl Bromide

Government officials in Cuba recently announced that use of the ozone-depleting fumigant methyl bromide on the country's tobacco plantations has been completely eliminated, marking an 80 percent reduction in Cuba's total use of the fumigant. With financial support from the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, the government said methyl bromide has been replaced with "alternative pest-control methods," including the Trichodermi fungus, and such organic materials as peat and rice husks. The fumigant was applied to the country's tobacco fields at a dosage of approximately 30 grams per square meter and covered under polyethelene blankets. Officials estimate that tobacco plantations on the island consumed up to 400 tons of methyl bromide per year in the 1980s. As a signatory to the Montreal Protocol, Cuba is required to eliminate all chlorofluorocarbons (CFC) by 2010 and halt its use of methyl bromide by 2015. The country prohibited all imports of CFC-based equipment and technology in 1999 and reduced its use of CFCs by 20 percent between 1997 and 2001. Additionally, the Cuban government has committed to reducing its CFC consumption to 312 tons annually by 2005. Government officials said the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) has completed nine CFC abatement projects in the country, including the establishment of an "ozone technical office." Currently, the government is working with UNDP to convert the air conditioning systems of Cuba's largest hospitals to non-ozone-depleting refrigerants.
Source: Inter Press Service (IPS), 18 September 2002
Article @: http://194.183.22.100/ips/ENG.NSF/vwWebMainView/2DCB34B30CF6905180256C36006DE9B7/?OpenDocument

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http://www.uneptie.org/ozonaction/compliance/ozonews/main.html

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