

# **“Trump's 'control-alt-delete' on climate change policy”**

**News story**

Edited by Simone Pagni in February 2017

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## BACKGROUND

Global warming is the term used to describe a gradual increase in the average temperature of the Earth's atmosphere and its oceans, a change that is believed to be permanently changing the Earth's climate. There is great debate among many people, and sometimes in the news, on whether global warming is real (some call it a hoax). But climate scientists looking at the data and facts agree the planet is warming. While many view the effects of global warming to be more substantial and more rapidly occurring than others do, the scientific consensus on climatic changes related to global warming is that the average temperature of the Earth has risen between 0.4 and 0.8 °C over the past 100 years.

The increased volumes of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases released by the burning of fossil fuels, land clearing, agriculture, and other human activities, are believed to be the primary sources of the global warming that has occurred over the past 50 years. Changes resulting from global warming may include rising sea levels due to the melting of the polar ice caps, as well as an increase in occurrence and severity of storms and other severe weather events.

On social media, 2016 has jokingly been called "the year on fire," and in terms of climate change, it was. Though there were some environmental successes this year, such as the Paris climate agreements becoming law, 2016 had some very depressing headlines regarding global warming and the planet's overall environmental health. Here is some of the most negative news to come out of "the year on fire."

### The Hottest Year on Record

2016 burned through heat records, and the year is poised to be the hottest year since recordkeeping began 122 years ago, by a significant margin. Also, July and August were considered as the hottest month the world has seen in the last 136 years.

### 400 M Milestone

Scientists predicted that the global atmospheric carbon dioxide concentration would pass the 400 parts per million mark, permanently. The 400-ppm milestone is largely symbolic, a sign of modern civilization's devastating impact on the planet, climate scientists have said. Since the industrial revolution, humans have been adding more carbon dioxide to the atmosphere than plants can take up. This process has driven carbon dioxide levels higher, adding to the greenhouse gas effect and increasing temperatures, along with many other climate change impacts.

### Arctic Sea-Ice Lows

The Arctic saw record lows for both the cover of sea ice during the winter (when it reaches its peak extent) and summer (when it reaches its minimum extent). Reports found that in 2016 ice levels showed the strongest, most pronounced signal of persistent warming due to climate change. In fact, the Arctic has continued to warm at twice the rate of the planet as a whole.

### Sea-level raising

Data collected by NASA satellites found that global sea levels are rising at a rate of about 1.9 millimeters per year, and models predict that sea levels could rise as much as 6.4 meters in the next century, if global warming continues unabated.

### Coral Reefs are dying

Researchers said the best-protected area of the Great Barrier Reef is dying. More than half of the corals of remote Australian coastline are now expected to die soon. Despite protection via marine parks, global warming has caused intense coral bleaching in the remote area and the impact is irreversible, the scientists said.

### Deadly Tornadoes

Tornadoes are becoming more common as the warming planet causes shifts in weather patterns across the U.S. New research showed that the number of tornadoes is increasing, and the trend will likely continue.

## The article: "Trump's 'control-alt-delete' on climate change policy"

by Matt McGrath Environment correspondent of BBC

25 January 2017

(taken from BBC.com)

Are the recent actions taken by the Trump team on the issues of climate and energy the opening shots in a war on knowledge?

Or are they simply what you'd expect from a new administration of a different political hue?

Let's examine what we know.

Just after Donald Trump was inaugurated as the 45th president, a range of information on the White House website related to climate change was moved to an Obama online archive. The only references to rising temperatures on the new Trump White House site are a commitment to eliminate "harmful and unnecessary policies such as the Climate Action Plan". This was President Obama's broad-based strategy to cut carbon emissions.

The brief White House document now contains a further indication of the green priorities of the new administration. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), should focus on its "essential mission of protecting our air and water".

While the administration figures out how to achieve that re-focus, staff at the EPA have been told to freeze all grant making, and to be quiet about it. This means that no external press releases will be issued and no social media posts will be permitted. It is unclear when these restrictions will be lifted.

Reports from news agencies indicate that the roll-back will not stop there, with climate information pages hosted by the EPA expected to be shut down.

"My guess is the web pages will be taken down, but the links and information will be available," the prominent climate sceptic and adviser to the Trump transition team, Myron Ebell, told Reuters.

"If the website goes dark, years of work we have done on climate change will disappear," said an anonymous EPA staff member, according to reports.

The Trump team has also taken immediate steps to push forward with two controversial oil pipelines.

So are all these moves evidence of a malevolent mindset, determined to crush all this snowflake climate change chatter?

Definitely, according to Alden Meyer, a veteran climate campaigner with the Union of Concerned Scientists.

"President Trump and his team are pursuing what I call a 'control-alt-delete' strategy: control the scientists in the federal agencies, alter science-based policies to fit their narrow ideological agenda, and delete scientific information from government websites," told BBC News.

"This is an across-the-board strategy that we are seeing at multiple federal agencies on a range of issues, though climate denialism is clearly the point of the spear."

Not according to White House spokesman Sean Spicer.

"I don't think it's any surprise that when there's an administration turnover, that we're going to review the policy," he said.

However the disappearance of tweets of basic climate change information from the Badlands National Park Twitter account has raised serious concerns that the Trump team is not just seeking to roll back regulation, but is also taking an ideological stand against what they might see as "warmist" propaganda.

Back in 2009, President Obama enacted rules that federal agencies should have scientific integrity policies, that guaranteed the rights of free speech of employees, following on from the gagging of some researchers and the altering of reports under the Bush administration. While the current steps being taken by the Trump team may turn out to be less restrictive than feared, on this side of the pond there's a great deal of concern.

Scientists see the forthcoming visit of UK prime minister Theresa May to Washington as an opportunity to press the President to rein in his approach.

"We are beginning to see our fears realised less than a week after President Trump has taken office," said Bob Ward, from the Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change and the Environment. "I hope that the Prime Minister will challenge President Trump about this censorship and political interference in the process of gaining and sharing knowledge about climate change during their meeting on Friday."

Climate scientists in the US are also rallying to fight back. A march on Washington by scientists is being proposed, Facebook pages and Twitter accounts have been created based on the idea that "an American government that ignores science to pursue ideological agendas endangers the world".

Meanwhile, another national park - Golden Gate NPS - has started tweeting climate facts.

## SOME PERSONAL CONSIDERATIONS

In reply to the debate around climate change, when Trump took office on 20th January 2017, the White House's website ([www.whitehouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov)) underwent a significant makeover, in which the page on climate change action that was set up by Barack Obama's administration (archived [here](#)) now reads, "The requested page "/energy/climate-change" could not be found."

With the election of Donald Trump as the next president of the United States, the future of climate change mitigation has been called into question, despite the Paris agreements becoming law in 2016. President Trump and his team are pursuing a “control-alt-delete” strategy: control the scientists in the federal agencies, alter science-based policies to fit their ideological agenda, and delete scientific information from government websites.



Credit: Spencer Platt | Getty Images

President-elect Trump has claimed that "the concept of global warming was created by and for the Chinese in order to make U.S. manufacturing non-competitive," according to a tweet posted by Trump in November 2012. Speaking about climate change in response to a variety of science-related questions, Trump referred to the issue in quotation marks and said: "There is still much that needs to be investigated in the field." The president-elect has also said that one of the top priorities for his presidency would be to remove the United States from the landmark Paris agreements, contrast the Clean Power Plan and boost the domestic coal and oil industries. Trump has already made political moves to remove climate change as a national concern. He has nominated a climate change denier and an ardent opponent of regulations for greenhouse gas emissions as Secretary of Interior (U.S. Rep. Cathy McMorris Rodgers). The president-elect has also chosen Scott Pruitt, a champion of the oil and gas industry, to run the Environmental Protection Agency — an agency that Pruitt is a vehement critic of.

But an American government that ignores science to pursue ideological agendas could endanger the world, removing the significant efforts against climate change which have been made recently.