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[Home](#) | [This Week's Contents](#) | [C&EN Classifieds](#) |  
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[Table of Contents](#)  
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[News of the Week](#)  
[Cover Story](#)  
[Editor's Page](#)  
[Business](#)  
[Government & Policy](#)  
[Science/Technology](#)  
[Concentrates](#)  
 [Business](#)  
 [Government & Policy](#)  
 [Science/Technology](#)  
[Education](#)  
[ACS News](#)  
[Calendars](#)  
[Books](#)  
[Digital Briefs](#)  
[ACS Comments](#)  
[Career & Employment](#)  
[Special Reports](#)  
[Letters](#)  
[Awards](#)  
[New Products](#)  
[Newscripts](#)  
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[What's That Stuff?](#)  
[Pharmaceutical Century](#)

[Hot Articles](#)  
[Safety Letters](#)  
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## NEWS OF THE WEEK

### CLIMATE CHANGE

June 11, 2001

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[\[Previous Story\]](#) [\[Next Story\]](#)

## SCIENCE AFFIRMS GLOBAL WARMING

NRC panel reports that impacts could be extremely adverse by 2100

BETTE HILEMAN

A panel of leading U.S. scientists reported to President George W. Bush last week that global warming is really happening and that it could have serious adverse societal and ecological impacts by the end of this century.

This conclusion could affect the President's policies in regard to energy and consideration of the Kyoto protocol. It may also affect the Administration's alternative plan of voluntary emissions targets that Bush is expected to present at a meeting of European Union leaders on June 14–15.

In its report, the 11-member [National Research Council \(NRC\)](#) panel concludes that "greenhouse gases are accumulating in the Earth's atmosphere as a result of human activities, causing surface air temperatures and subsurface ocean temperatures to rise." Global mean surface air temperatures warmed between 0.7 and 1.5 °F during the 20th century, the report says. And if present trends continue, global average temperatures will rise a further 2.5 to 10.4 °F by 2100, with a mid-level projection of 5.4 °F.

"We don't know precisely how much of [the temperature] rise to date is from human activities, but based on physical principles and highly sophisticated computer models, we expect the

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warming to continue because of greenhouse gas emissions," says Ralph J. Cicerone, chancellor of the University of California, Irvine.

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NRC prepared the report in response to a White House request on May 11, which asked NRC to address two questions: What are the most certain and most uncertain areas in climate-change science, and are there any substantive differences between the latest United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report and the IPCC summaries

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The NRC report concludes that the full IPCC report on the science of climate change is adequately summarized in its 60-page technical summary. IPCC's 20-page summary for policymakers has somewhat different emphases, NRC says, because it focuses on areas of major policy concerns.

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The scientific panel convened by NRC included previous skeptics on global warming, such as Richard S. Lindzen, professor of meteorology at Massachusetts Institute of Technology. "The [National Academy of Sciences](#) sent a very clear message to the President: The science is clear. And the decisions you make now will influence global warming for the next 100 years," says Philip E. Clapp, president of the National Environmental Trust.

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