



Probe clears scientists in 'Climategate'

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Members of the review group talk to the media on their findings at the Royal Institution in London on Tuesday during the release of their report into the University of East Anglia e-mails on climate change. The report into the leak of hundreds of e-mails from one of the world's leading climate research centers has largely vindicated the scientists involved.

A final investigation of stolen e-mails that raised suspicions about the science behind global warming cleared scientists of any misconduct on Wednesday, but it called for researchers to be more open with their data.

"We find that their rigour and honesty as scientists are not in doubt," concludes the report, headed by Muir Russell, leader of Scotland's Judicial Appointments Board. The board added the scientists did not "prejudice" recent international climate change panels.

The report findings echo two United Kingdom inquests released earlier, and a Penn State investigation unveiled last week that cleared a researcher, [Michael Mann](#), of impropriety in the case, widely dubbed "Climategate" in news reports. All dealt with allegations about 1,073 e-mails hacked in November from the United Kingdom's University of East Anglia Climate Research Unit (CRU).

Most of the e-mails discussed averaging past temperature records, the central interest of the CRU team headed by climate researcher [Phil Jones](#), finding temperatures now significantly higher than in the past.

Some of the e-mails came under fire for appearing to dismiss those who questioned the global warming predictions and for discussing boycotts of journals publishing results that likewise questioned the science, sometimes in vivid ways. (Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory's Ben Santer wrote in one that he was "tempted to beat the crap out of," climate researcher [Patrick Michaels](#) of the [Cato Institute](#), a libertarian think tank.)

"Now that the e-mails have become public, some are doubtless regretted by their authors," the Russell report says. And it noted "a consistent pattern of failing to display the proper degree of openness" by the scientists and university in response to critics' data requests. But it finds, as have past reports, that others have independently arrived at results echoing the CRU research. The Russell report went so far as to reproduce the CRU results with publicly available data.

In March, the U.S. National Research Council released three congressionally requested reports reconfirming that average global surface temperatures rose 1.4 degrees over the past century, with a likely rise between 2 degrees and 11.5 degrees by 2100, largely depending on greenhouse gas emissions.

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"Overall, the report adds to the others showing the scientists haven't done anything wrong," says climate scientist Donald Wuebbles of the University of Illinois. "How would you like to have 13 years of your e-mail stolen and picked over for everything unkind you've ever said?"

Michaels disagrees with the Russell report and others. "There's no way that science community is going to admit to any type of misconduct," he says.

However, "this is no whitewash," says science misconduct expert Daniele Fanelli of the United Kingdom's [University of Edinburgh](#). "Implicitly, the report is saying something was wrong here, we need more transparency in the system of communicating the science."

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