

Hackers steal electronic data from top climate research center

Scientists' e-mails deriding skeptics of warming become public

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Hackers broke into the electronic files of one of the world's foremost climate research centers this week and posted an array of e-mails in which prominent scientists engaged in a blunt discussion of global warming research and disparaged climate-change skeptics.

The skeptics have seized upon e-mails stolen from the Climatic Research Unit of the University of East Anglia in Britain as evidence that scientific data have been rigged to make it appear as if humans are causing global warming. The researchers, however, say the e-mails have been taken out of context and merely reflect an honest exchange of ideas.

University officials confirmed the data breach, which involves more than 1,000 e-mails and 3,000 documents, but said they could not say how many of the stolen items were authentic.

"We are aware that information from a server in one area of the university has been made available on public websites," the statement says. "We are extremely concerned that personal information about individuals may have been compromised. Because of the volume of this information we cannot currently confirm what proportion of this material is genuine."

Michael E. Mann, who directs the Earth System Science Center at Pennsylvania State University, said in a telephone interview from Paris that skeptics are "taking these words totally out of context to make something trivial appear nefarious."

In one e-mail from 1999, the center's director, Phil Jones, alludes to one of Mann's articles in the journal *Nature* and writes, "I've just completed Mike's *Nature* trick of adding in the real temps to each series for the last 20 years (i.e., from 1981 onwards) and from 1961 for Keith's to hide the decline."

Mann said the "trick" Jones referred to was placing a chart of proxy temperature records, which ended in 1980, next to a line showing the temperature record collected by instruments from that time onward. "It's hardly anything you would call a trick," Mann said, adding that both charts were differentiated and clearly marked.

But Myron Ebell, director of energy and global warming policy for the Competitive Enterprise Institute, said this and other exchanges show researchers have colluded to establish the scientific consensus that humans are causing climate change.

"It is clear that some of the 'world's leading climate scientists,' as they are always described, are more dedicated to promoting the alarmist political agenda than in scientific research," said Ebell, whose group is funded in part by energy companies. "Some of the e-mails that I have read are blatant displays of personal pettiness, unethical conniving, and twisting the science to support their political position."

In one e-mail, Ben Santer, a scientist at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, offered to beat up skeptic Pat Michaels, a senior fellow at the libertarian Cato Institute, out of sympathy for Jones.

Neither Jones nor Santer could be reached for comment.