

Google Emissions Study Borders on the Absurd

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Through a Glass, Darkly
Google Emissions Study Borders on the Absurd

Robert L. Glass

Is it just me, or is the global warming movement heading toward absurdity?

What triggers my question is the recent news article, emblazoned all over the web and various newspapers, to the effect that using Google leads to carbon emissions. If you didn't see the article, take that as a clue that you're not getting around as much as you should!

Now I realize that there is lots of "Inconvenient Truth" in Global Warming, and that those warming-warning (Green) voices are shrill for what appear to be some very good reasons. But at the same time, attacking Google use as environmentally unfriendly? That's absolute wacko.

The story results from a research study that basically says that every time we do a Google query, because of the host computers Google uses and because of the way they conduct their searches on multiple computers at a time, "a typical Google search can generate about the same amount of carbon dioxide as boiling a kettle for a cup of tea." That finding, and the accompanying story, results from the work of Professor Alex Wisnner-Gross, a Harvard University research physicist. (Interestingly, the news release apparently was made before the research study had been accepted anywhere for publication, a peculiar choice at best for a researcher).

Now there are many different levels on which this story bothers me:

1. What's the alternative to a Google search? Getting in the car and driving to the library? Purchasing a huge set of encyclopedias for use in the home? I can't think of an alternative that is more beneficial to the environment than that Google search the professor is concerned about.
2. Are we really getting concerned about the amount of CO-2 generated by boiling water for a cup of tea? I would suggest a more direct criticism would be to avoid drinking tea (and you can throw in your darned pot of coffee, while you're at it!)
3. Why not examine the amount of CO-2 generated by emailing friends around the world? Contacting colleagues? How did it come to pass that Google is what we are focusing on, when there are so many other (inconvenient) targets?
4. Isn't there a CO-2 problem in distributing news releases to the media? How much CO-2 was burned by the professor's notifying the press of his findings? How much more was burned by the press's publishing them?
5. Vegetarian Greenies also point out that, because farm animals apparently let out enormous quantities of wind (somehow I find this hard to believe – I have a feeling we'll

come to realize this is a “rural legend” one of these days), we should all quit eating meat (and thus quit raising those animals) and become vegetarians. My feeling is, I’d carry this one step further – it creates a lot of CO-2 to harvest all those vegetarian crops, and I think we need to seriously question our practice of killing vegetables in order to avoid killing animals.

What I’m really trying to say here is this: We’re getting downright absurd in our attempts to minimize CO-2 emissions. At the highest level, of course, that’s an extremely worthy goal. But at the miniscule level, these kinds of complaints come through as being from people who want to remove all of the joys from life in order to save the environment. It’s sort of like suppressing human freedom in the name of human freedom, an exercise we’ve also had to contend with over the last few years! Perhaps it’s time we re-learned the lesson that we are still trying to learn about Religion – there are religious people, and then there are Extreme religious people, and the latter tend to be the ones who are our enemies. Is it time to introduce a new term, “Extreme Green”?

Google on guiltlessly, my friends. The CO-2 you save (by not pursuing the alternatives) will be HUGE!

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“Through a Glass, Darkly,” is a Biblical expression for the unclear way in which we see the world around us.

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