



Why 350?

To the Editor
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What is in the number 350? Why has 350 become an important number for everyone to recognize? Because Dr. James Hansen, the NASA researcher who first raised the alarm about global warming, has determined that 350 parts per million (ppm) of carbon dioxide (CO₂) in the earth's atmosphere is the number that represents safety. In order for the earth as we know it to survive, atmospheric levels of CO₂ must *come back down* to 350 ppm. The current number is 385 ppm, and climbing.

To quote Dr. Hansen: "*If humanity wishes to preserve a planet similar to that on which civilization developed and to which life on Earth is adapted, paleoclimate evidence and ongoing climate change suggest that CO₂ will need to be reduced from its current 385 ppm to at most 350 ppm.*" (www.350.org)

This December a United Nations Climate Change Conference will meet in Copenhagen to craft a new international treaty on cutting emissions. The new treaty will be the sequel to the Kyoto Protocol and represents our last, best chance as a global community to prevent runaway, irreversible, and catastrophic climate change. It is imperative that the world of nations, led by the United States, support strong measures that set us on a course to slow down the climb in CO₂ emissions and head them back to 350 ppm.

On Saturday, October 24, demonstrations of support for strong new emissions protocols will be held around the world as we celebrate the International Day of Climate Action (www.350.org). Demonstrations will be held in Amherst and likely in other local towns as well. In Amherst our purpose is to send a clear message to President Obama and Senator Kerry as they head to Copenhagen that "*the solutions to climate change must be equitable, grounded in science, and meet the scale of the crisis.*" It is not too late to act, but we need to move quickly.

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Amherst 350 Committee