

CLIMATE CHANGE MYTH BUSTER

Talking points for starting a conversation with a sceptic. What's their personal experience? Are they worried about jobs? Extreme weather? Pollution? Here are some useful facts to help engage them.

MYTH 1 Changes to the climate are part of nature and have been taking place for thousands of years.

FACTS The climate has changed throughout the earth's history, but the huge changes happening to our climate today are not caused by nature. Scientific research shows us that the last ice age ended around 11,000 years ago and since then the earth's climate has been relatively stable.

However, over the course of the last century our climate has started to change rapidly, with an unusual increase in global temperatures, accompanied by changes in extremes of weather. There is overwhelming scientific evidence which demonstrates this change is due to increased amounts of greenhouse gasses in the atmosphere. Greenhouse gasses occur naturally in the atmosphere, but human activity such as burning of fossil fuels, such as coal, natural gas and oil, as well as the growing release of methane from fracking, have dramatically increased their prevalence.

MYTH 2 Scientists can't agree that climate change even exists. The jury is still out.

FACTS The vast majority of scientists – 97% – agree that climate change exists and that human activity such as burning fossil fuels is responsible for recent warming. There is consensus among scientists that the climate is being changed by human activity, in the same way as there is consensus on the links between smoking and lung cancer. (The tobacco industry resisted this consensus for decades, just as the fossil fuel lobby is resisting the scientific consensus around climate change.)

MYTH 3 The Keystone and Dakota Access Pipeline would create thousands of jobs.

FACTS Pipelines create a small number of temporary jobs. Converting our energy supply to clean sources such as solar, wind and water power will create millions more permanent jobs.

Weatherizing homes, retrofitting office buildings and new infrastructure for a renewable future will be a huge job creation initiative.

MYTH 4 Look at the record snow falls we've had lately, how can you tell me that we're experiencing global warming?

FACTS Global warming caused by dramatically rising carbon dioxide emissions has caused the overall climate to change. Warmer air in the atmosphere holds more moisture, which leads to more severe and frequent hurricanes and snow storms.

Also, as the earth heats, the polar ice caps start to melt, which causes sea levels to rise, putting island nations and coastal communities – including the NYC metropolitan area at risk. Remember the impact that Super Storm Sandy had in our area.

MYTH 5 Okay, so it's a problem. But I've got more urgent things to worry about, like affordable health care, mass incarceration and immigrant rights.

FACTS Climate change is affecting our health right now. Allergies, asthma, and infectious disease outbreaks have become more common due to increased growth of pollen-producing ragweed, higher levels of air pollution, and the spread of conditions favorable to pathogens and mosquitoes which carry viruses causing diseases like Zika.

Communities with the least financial resources are suffering first and worst. Inexpensive housing is less likely to be able to withstand storms and more likely to be built on a flood plain in the first place.

Drought caused by climate change in Syria fueled mass migration to the cities (like Aleppo), which was a major factor in the outbreak of civil war. The enormous displacement in the Middle East is just a pre-cursor to the millions of refugees who will be created in the coming decades as droughts, rising sea levels and the spread of diseases caused by climate change makes more and more areas uninhabitable.

