

CLIMATE NEWS

From Sheldon Whitehouse, Barbara Boxer, and Jeff Merkley
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U.S. Navy Shuts Arctic Submarine Ice Camp After Cracks Appear



Submarines have conducted under-ice operations in the Arctic region for more than 50 years to support inter-fleet transit, training, and engagements with allies and military operations, but recently sea-ice changes have been affecting these operations. The U.S. Navy said on Monday it was dismantling a temporary ice camp used to support submarine exercises off the coast of Alaska a week early after cracks appeared in the ice making it too risky to use airfields to ferry people and supplies. The camp is essentially a small village with housing, a mess tent and buildings where scientific and military exercises are coordinated and conducted. Navy officials said the instability of the ice underscored growing concern about the changing Arctic environment. A February report released by the Navy stated it is interested in expanding its presence in the Arctic beginning around 2020. The Navy's analysis also showed that seasonal ice is disappearing faster than had been anticipated. In 2011, the Navy noted a reduction in the thickness of the ice in the area where the base camp had been located in the past. Thickness of the ice was a concern this year in selection of a camp site. *(Reuters)*

Carbon Dioxide Benchmark Hits New Heights

"This year, the seasonally fluctuating atmospheric carbon dioxide concentration has crossed 401 parts per million (ppm) three times this month, and hit a record 401.6 on March 12", said Ralph Keeling at the Scripps Institution of Oceanography in San Diego. The first recorded carbon dioxide levels above 400 ppm occurred last May at Hawaii's Mauna Loa Observatory. Daily readings at Mauna Loa started with Keeling's father, Charles, in 1958, when the atmospheric concentrations were below 320 ppm. The numbers have not only continued to rise, but have picked up steam as carbon emissions from fossil fuel consumption have accumulated in the atmosphere. It's been several million years since the Earth saw carbon dioxide levels as high as they are today, said Dr. Wuebbles, a University of Illinois professor of atmospheric science. If current trends continue, "we easily could reach 600 parts per million at the end of the century," he said. "That would put us into the carbon dioxide levels of the age of the dinosaurs, and that we know was a much warmer world." The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change found increasing evidence that ice sheets are losing mass, glaciers are shrinking, Arctic sea ice and snow cover are decreasing and permafrost is thawing in the Northern Hemisphere. Tide gauges and satellite data make it "unequivocal" that the world's mean sea level is on the upswing. *(CNN)*

ExxonMobil Agrees to Report on Plans for Low-Carbon Future

ExxonMobil is the first oil and gas producer in the U.S. to commit to reporting on the risk of stranded oil and gas assets due to climate change as a result of shareholder pressure. Exxon has agreed to report on its plans for a future in which market forces and stricter carbon pollution standards may leave some of its carbon reserves stranded. Investors have raised concerns that stranded assets, also known as a "carbon bubble," could occur if fossil fuel reserves are suddenly revalued under future changes in government policies for greenhouse gas emissions. In response to the forthcoming report, Natasha Lamb, Director of Equity Research and Shareholder Engagement at Arjuna Capital, said "in the past, Exxon has been seen as a climate denier," but now seems to be making more of an effort to engage with shareholders on climate change and related issues. *(Bloomberg News)*

Climate Change Cost China \$2.6 Billion in Damage Last Year

China, the world's leading greenhouse gas emitter in 2013, has concluded that climate change is causing sea-level rise and ocean warming resulting in stronger typhoons, flooding, soil salinization and coastal erosion. The China State Oceanic Administration estimated that losses from climate change related effects reached 16.3 billion yuan (\$2.6 billion) compared with a 10-year average of 15.1 billion yuan. Storm surge caused 94 percent of the damage in 2013 and killed 121 people. The administration also found that sea levels in China have been rising 2.1 millimeters each year since 1980, faster than the global sea-level rise rate. The economic damage caused by these changes last year was the highest in over 5 years. In response the Chinese have strengthened their environmental and coastal defenses as rising seas pose an increasing risk to cities like Shanghai, Tianjin and Guangzhou. *(ClimateWire)*