Greenhouse Effect Essay, Research Paper

Greenhouse Effect

When one starts a car or burns wood, the last thought on their mind is the

consequences to these actions. Unfortunately, the daily dangers to earth are not

widely know. Due to the constant change of society, this planet must cope with

various problems. One of the most important ecological structures is the ozone

layer. The same shield that protects us from the sun?s deadly radiation, can

also act as a blanket engulfing us in heat. This situation is know as the

greenhouse effect. What is the greenhouse effect, what causes it, and what can

be done to control it?

The problem of global warming has been around for some time now. Though not

until recently has it become a priority. So important, that figures such as Vice

President Al Gore have spoken out. Many are realizing that the greenhouse effect

is not something to be put aside, yet rather something to be worked on and

studied. “The greenhouse effect displays that nature is not immune to our

presence” (Kralijic, 1992). Ways must be found to lessen the threat of this

growing crisis. If this effect were to continue and grow, the earth?s population

would be exposed to serious threats.

Carbon dioxide is essential for plants who use it for photosynthesis, yet too

much can lead to serious threats. The problem lies in the disruption of the

balance between how much carbon dioxide plants intake, and what our population

produces. If this natural filtering process is unbalanced, the atmosphere will

receive too much carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases. Once these gases

form in the atmosphere, they act as barriers trapping in heat and warming the

earth.

This process is not new. In fact, without the greenhouse effect, the average

surface temperature of the earth would be about 59 Fahrenheit degrees lower than

it is today. “Long before civilization intervened , the thin blanket of gases

that surround the earth was efficiently trapping a tiny portion of the sun?s

heat and keeping it near the surface to warm up the air just enough to prevent

temperatures from plunging to frigid extremes every night- which, of course, is

exactly what happens on the moon and on planets like Mars that have very thin

atmospheres” (Gore, 1992).

The greenhouse effect received its name because the atmosphere of the earth acts

much like the glass roof on a greenhouse. Sunlight enters the greenhouse through

the glass as it heats up the plants. Then, the warmth is trapped as the glass

slows the withdraw of heat. Similarly, the earth?s atmosphere lets most of the

sun?s light enter and heat the surface. The earth then sends this energy, called

Infrared Radiation, back into the atmosphere (showed in the diagram on page 7).

This is when the actual effect takes place. Not all of the Infrared Radiation is

sent freely into space. Certain gases in the atmosphere absorb it and send it

back toward earth. Such gases are Carbon Dioxide, Ozone, and water vapor. As

stated earlier, this process becoming more important. Due to the burning of

fossil fuels such as coal, oil, and natural gas, carbon dioxide is increasing

thus increasing the amplitude of the greenhouse effect. The greenhouse effect

would have disastrous on this planet?s population. “Climate changes will

threaten agriculture and our food supply, probably eliminating the Great Plains

or prairies of North America as a region in which crops may be grown, for

example. Also, melting of parts of the Antarctic ice sheet will cause flooding

of coastal cities such as London , New York, Beijing, Amsterdam, St. John?s,

Halifax, Vancouver , even Montreal and of entire countries, such as Bangladesh”

(Johnson, 1990). The greenhouse effect is not limited to certain countries or

states. The entire world will suffer if it is allowed to grow. “Some scientists

think that from the late 1990?s to the late 2000?s the amount of carbon dioxide

in the atmosphere could double. If this doubling were to occur, it would

intensify the greenhouse effect and result in an increase of 2.7 to 11

Fahrenheit degrees (1.5 to 6 Celsius degrees) in the earth?s average

temperature” (Gille, 1988). The results are real and quite intense. The outlook

is not good.

Something must be done quickly to slow the growth of the greenhouse effect. It

is not a hopeless situation. “Reverse your oxygen debt. The less fuel you burn

and the more oxygen-producing plants you grow, the more you will add oxygen to

the atmosphere and lower your output of greenhouse gases” (British Columbia

Medical Association, 1990). Solar power also plays a part in this. Although just

recently taking hold, solar power could greatly lessen the output of the

greenhouse gases as could hydroelectric power could. Besides different power

sources, many companies are producing environment safe products and even air

cleaners. It may be a nuisance, but it is possible to lessen the greenhouse

effect.

The issue of the greenhouse effect is not seriously taken by many people. If it

doesn?t jump out in front of their faces or directly and immediately concern

them, they pay no attention. If we do not take action,

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