

## Global Warning

Deep in the Arctic a mother polar bear is returning from a long, hard day of hunting. But looking ahead she sees the ice floes she uses to get home are much farther apart. It will be a lot harder to make it home.

She jumps in and swims for it but pretty soon becomes exhausted. Just when she can't make it any further another ice floe appears. She barely made it.

Sadly, not all polar bears are this lucky. The North Polar ice caps are melting rapidly causing all sorts of problems needing grave attention. The cause of this problem I can sum up in two words. Global warming. Global warming is caused by carbon dioxide and other air pollution that's collecting up and trapping the sun's heat. Many of us never dream that little things like driving a car and turning on the lights could be part of the reason this planet is warming up. Scientists believe that U.S. temperatures could be 3 to 9 degrees higher by the end of the century. To make matters worse, global warming doesn't only affect polar bears, but people and places all over the world. It is crucial we take action against global warming and all the issues it has caused before it's too late.

Global warming is a huge problem most people don't seem to be aware of. And the environment is just one of the things changing around us. Things never heard of before are jeopardizing our planet. In 2002, Colorado, Arizona, and Oregon suffered through one of the worst wildfire seasons ever. At the same time, Montana and Texas endured droughts that were creating dust storms. And to add to all these rugged weather changes, just the next year, 2003, extreme heat waves caused more than 20,000 deaths in Europe and more than 1,500 deaths in India. Talk about changing climate.

And I'm only getting started. Let's go back to the polar bears. As I briefly mentioned before, in the Arctic and Antarctic dramatic changes are happening. Even though the Arctic is a region meant to stay frozen 365 days a year, the ice cap is melting rapidly. Unless we stop releasing greenhouse gases the polar ice cap will completely disappear each year during summertime. In the book *An Inconvenient Truth*, it clearly states, "This is a dangerous situation for all of us, because the Arctic ice cap plays a very crucial role in cooling the entire planet." We are in a very serious position. We must stop Global Warming!

As Al Gore once said, "Each one of us is a cause of global warming, but each of us can become part of the solution..." It isn't too late to stop global warming, or at least slow it down a bit. And who better than us, the cause of this awful problem, to do just that. Tell me, how often do you use your car? Don't get me wrong I don't want you to stop using it completely, but cars are the 2nd to largest source of global warming. Cars burn off tons carbon dioxide. This creates a hole in the ozone layer. Very VERY strong sunlight shines through the hole which contributes to global warming.

One quick and easy way to save money and gas is to carpool with your friends and family. That way instead of the pollution from 2 cars, it will be just one! Or even better, buy a hybrid car! These energy efficient cars have gas electric engines and cut global warming pollution by one third or more. Much better than Hummers and SUV's. The popularity of these cars has generated a 20% increase in transportation-related carbon dioxide pollution.

It's hard to believe that something as simple as the light bulb could play a major role in global warming. But there is a way to save energy for everything. Instead of picking incandescent light bulb choose a compact fluorescing one instead. You'll lower your energy bill AND keep nearly 700 pounds of carbon

dioxide out of the air. How about that, a way to save money, and the environment<sup>1</sup> Another way to reduce carbon dioxide pollution is to take a chance and try a refrigerator with the Energy Star label. That indicates it uses at least 15 percent less energy than the federal requirement. Try to make everything you do one more step towards solving global warming. Every little thing counts.

If we want our children to grow up in a carefree, healthy world, we need to start working toward it now. We are not just hurting the earth, but hurting ourselves and the way we live. Some of it we can't help, but most of it we can and should try to change. When so much has already been lost to us think how life might be in a few years? In the words of Al Gore—

“It is our only home.

And we must take care of it.”