

***Climate Change Awareness Time Line: How Did We Get to Today***

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**Abstract**

The climate change issue has really entered the awareness of the general public within the last two years or so. During that time, references in the media have progressed from the back page of the newspapers to front page news. Other than in the minds of atmospheric scientists, environmentalists, and policy makers, climate change had seemed to be a distant threat that could be dealt with at a later time, if needed. Within the last two years, the public awareness of the issue has become almost universal, penetrating the fiber of almost all mass communications media, from the comic strips to national TV programming.

This rather sudden awakening of the public to the issue raises the question of how we got to this point so suddenly. This presentation examines the time line of climate change in terms of the causal factors and the response of governments and institutions. The environmental changes leading to climate change have been unfolding for about three centuries. The rising awareness and response to the issue have evolved over roughly three decades. The widespread public awareness has arguably developed over less than three years.