

The Climate Deception Dossiers

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Containing 85 internal memos totaling more than 330 pages, the seven dossiers reveal a range of deceptive tactics deployed by the fossil fuel industry. These include forged letters to Congress, secret funding of a supposedly independent scientist, the creation of fake grassroots organizations, multiple efforts to deliberately manufacture uncertainty about climate science, and more.

The documents clearly show that:

- Fossil fuel companies have intentionally spread climate disinformation for decades.
- Fossil fuel company leaders knew that their products were harmful to people and the planet but still chose to actively deceive the public and deny this harm.
- The campaign of deception continues today.

What fossil fuel companies knew and when they knew it

The fundamentals of global warming have been well established for generations. Fossil fuel companies have almost certainly been aware of the underlying climate science for decades.

As early as 1977, representatives from major fossil fuel companies attended dozens of congressional hearings in which the contribution of carbon emissions to the greenhouse effect was discussed. By 1981 at least one company (Exxon) was already considering the climate implications of a large fossil fuel extraction project.

In 1988, the issue moved beyond the scientific community and onto the national stage. James Hansen, a leading NASA climate scientist, testified before Congress that scientific data had confirmed that industrial activities were causing climate change. It was also in 1988 that the United Nations formed the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and the U.S. Congress introduced the National Energy Policy Act in an effort to reduce emissions of heat-trapping gases. It is difficult to imagine that executives, lobbyists, and scientists at major fossil companies were by this time unaware of the robust scientific evidence of the risks associated with the continued burning of their products.

Indeed, one of the key documents highlighted in the deception dossiers is a 1995 internal memo written by a team headed by a Mobil Corporation scientist and distributed to many major fossil fuel companies. The internal report warned unequivocally that burning the companies' products was causing climate change and that the relevant science "is well established and cannot be denied."

How did fossil fuel companies respond? They embarked on a series of campaigns to deliberately deceive the public about the reality of climate change and block any actions that might curb carbon emissions.

The result? More than half of all industrial carbon emissions have been released since 1988 and there is still no comprehensive U.S. federal policy to address the problem.

Holding fossil fuel companies accountable

As the picture of fossil fuel companies' efforts to deceive the public comes into clear view, the time is ripe to hold these companies accountable for their actions and responsible for the harm they have caused.

So how should the US public expect fossil fuel companies to behave? At a minimum, society should expect them to:

- **Stop disseminating misinformation about climate change.** It is unacceptable for fossil fuel companies to deny established climate science. It is also unacceptable for companies to publicly accept the science while funding climate contrarian scientists or front groups that distort or deny the science.
- **Support fair and cost-effective policies to reduce global warming emissions.** It is time for the industry to identify and publicly support policies that will lead to the reduction of emissions at a scale needed to reduce the worst effects of global warming.
- **Reduce emissions from current operations and update their business models to prepare for future global**

limits on emissions. Companies should take immediate action to cut emissions from their current operations, update their business models to reflect the risks of unabated burning of fossil fuels, and map out the pathway they plan to take in the next 20 years to ensure we achieve a low-carbon energy future.

- **Pay for their share of the costs of climate damages and preparedness.** Communities around the world are already facing and paying for damages from rising seas, extreme heat, more frequent droughts, and other climate-related impacts. Today and in the future, fossil fuel companies should pay a fair share of the costs.
- **Fully disclose the financial and physical risks of climate change to their business operations.** As is required by law, fossil fuel companies are required to discuss risks—including climate change—that might materially affect their business in their annual SEC filings. Today, compliance with this requirement is not consistent.

Source documents (PDFs)

- [Email from Former Exxon Employee Lenny Bernstein](#)
- [Deception Dossier #1: Dr. Wei-Hock Soon's Smithsonian Contracts](#)
- [Deception Dossier #2: American Petroleum Institute's "Roadmap" Memo](#)
- [Deception Dossier #3: Western States Petroleum Association's Deception Campaign](#)
- [Deception Dossier #4: Forged Letters from the Coal Industry to Members of Congress](#)
- [Deception Dossier #5: Coal's "Information Council on the Environment" Sham](#)
- [Deception Dossier #6: Deception by the American Legislative Exchange Council](#)
- [Deception Dossier #7: The Global Climate Coalition's 1995 Primer on Climate Change Science](#)
- [Deception Dossiers: All Documents](#)

High-Resolution Graphics (JPGs)

- [Deception Dossier #1: Dr. Wei-Hock Soon's Smithsonian Contracts](#)
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