



The goal of our monthly update is to provide information on timely matters that may impact your practice and professional interests.



WMO FOUND 2004 RECORD YEAR FOR CARBON DIOXIDE

The World Meteorological Organization reported earlier this month that carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases reached record high levels in 2004 in the atmosphere based on readings obtained from 44 countries. A growing number of scientific studies bolster the theory that increased levels of carbon dioxide, methane (from natural sources), and other gases are accumulating in the atmosphere where they trap heat and raise the Earth's temperature. According to NASA, 2005 had the highest annual average surface temperature worldwide since instrument recordings began in the late 1800s. The debate among experts continues to heat-up as to their effect on global warming while vested interests remain concerned about how managing carbon risk will affect their bottom line.



SCHOOLS DROP BALL ON NEEDED COMPUTING SKILLS

Microsoft Research scientists, as part of their 2020 report, stated that schools and colleges are not training the next generation of scientists with the necessary computer skills to be highly computationally literate in addition to being highly scientifically literate. They argue that their current emphasis is tilted toward basic computing skills: reading e-mails and doing word processing, etc. while failing to offer computational science courses relevant to analyzing large data collections, searching, making hypotheses and doing simulations.



U.S BRIDGE DISASTERS: COLLAPSE AND CHAOS?

Bridge collapses and other disasters due to infrastructure aging present threats since traditionally governments and other groups tasked with observing bridge safety often put off needed maintenance and ignore warnings about possible safety issues. Although most bridges are only built to last approximately 50 years, many heavily-used bridges in the U.S. are older, creating additional risks. Railroad bridges have particular risks that make them vulnerable

to major accidents. Although the likelihood of a major bridge collapse is low yet uncertain, the losses involved in such an incident could be quite high. Accordingly insurance carriers need to determine, in advance, how they plan to respond to losses from a disaster involving a bridge they currently insure.



THE NEED TO PULL PLUG ON STANDBY POWER LOSS

There are numerous electrically powered devices that spend much of the time in "standby" mode-resulting in unnecessary power wastage. Lawrence Berkeley Laboratory (LBL) scientists reported in 2000 that as much as 10% of household power consumption came from appliances in the standby mode. LBL scientists studying this problem recently reported that almost all standby functions can be carried out with no more than 1 watt using "switch mode" technology vs. a high 13% consumption required by some appliances. Australia became the first nation to adopt a "one-watt" standard for such devices. U.S. government agencies, since 2001 must meet the "one watt standard when purchasing commercial devices that employ external standby power devices or feature internal standby power functionality.

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