

# Pollution in China altering weather in Western U.S.

By John Blackstone, CBS News

A U.N. conference on climate change ended Sunday without a major deal to cut toxic emissions. No country emits more carbon dioxide than China – a byproduct of its booming economy. And, as CBS News correspondent John Blackstone reports, those Chinese emissions are having a big impact in the U.S.

Chinese officials insist the murky air over Beijing this month is just fog. But measurements taken at the U.S. embassy there show dangerously high levels of air pollution – so bad that traffic has been disrupted and flights have been delayed or cancelled.

“It’s no longer just their problem; it’s our problem,” said Kim Prather of the Scripps Institution of Oceanography.

Prather studies atmospheric chemistry. CBS News met her at a scientific conference in San Francisco, where she was presenting research that shows what’s in the air over China can affect the weather in America.

“The atmosphere has no walls,” she said. “So pollution on this side of the world can make it the other side of the world in about five days.”

The Chinese pollution is carried by the jet stream across the Pacific. In the atmosphere over this country, it can stop the clouds from producing rain and snow.

In general, Prather said, the equation is more pollution equals less precipitation.

The particles of air pollution from China collect moisture in

the clouds. But the particles are so small and numerous they don't get heavy enough to fall as rain or snow. So the water stays in the clouds.

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