

Q16

Has the Montreal Protocol been successful in reducing ozone-depleting substances in the atmosphere?

Yes, as a result of the Montreal Protocol, the overall abundance of ozone-depleting substances (ODSs) in the atmosphere has been decreasing for about a decade. If the nations of the world continue to comply with the provisions of the Montreal Protocol, the decrease will continue throughout the 21st century. Those gases that are still increasing in the atmosphere, such as halon-1301 and HCFC-22, will begin to decrease in the coming decades if compliance with the Protocol continues. Only after midcentury will the effective abundance of ODSs fall to values that were present before the Antarctic ozone hole was observed in the early 1980s.

The Montreal Protocol and its Amendments and Adjustments have been very successful in reducing the atmospheric abundance of ozone-depleting substances (ODSs). ODSs are halogen source gases released by human activities. Under the Protocol, the production and consumption of individual ODSs are now controlled in all 196 nations that are Parties to the Protocol (see Q15). The success of the Montreal Protocol controls is documented by (1) observed changes and future projections of the atmospheric abundance of the principal ODSs and (2) long-term values of *equivalent effective stratospheric chlorine* (EESC).

Individual ODS reductions. The reduction in the atmospheric abundance of an ODS in response to controls on production and consumption depends principally on two factors: (1) how rapidly an ODS is used and released to the atmosphere after being produced and (2) the lifetime for the removal of the ODS from the atmosphere (see Table Q7-1). For example, the abundances of ODSs with short lifetimes respond quickly to emission reductions. Long-term changes in ODS abundances are constructed from (1) estimates of historical emissions and bank quantities using industry reports, (2) abundances measured in air trapped for years in accumulated snow (firn) in polar regions, (3) observed atmospheric abundances using ground-based measurements, and (4) projections of future abundances based on compliance with Montreal Protocol provisions and patterns of use in developed and developing countries. The results for individual ODSs and the natural chlorine source gas, methyl chloride (CH₃Cl), are shown in Figure Q16-1 and described as follows:

► **CFCs.** Chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) include some of the most destructive chlorine-containing ODSs. CFC-11 and CFC-12, each with an Ozone Depletion Potential (ODP) near 1, are the most abundant ODSs in the atmosphere owing to large historical emissions and long atmospheric lifetimes (45–100 years). Production and consumption of

CFCs in developed countries ended in 1996 and that in developing countries ended by January 2010. As a consequence, CFC-11 and CFC-113 abundances have peaked in the atmosphere and have been declining for more than a decade. In contrast, CFC-12 abundances have only recently shown a decrease, owing to its longer lifetime (100 years) and continuing emissions from CFC-12 banks, namely, refrigeration and air conditioning equipment and thermal insulating foams. With no further global production of the principal CFCs allowed except for limited exempted uses and with some continuing emissions from banks, CFC abundances are projected to decline steadily throughout this century.

► **Halons.** Halons are the most destructive bromine-containing ODSs. The most abundant in the atmosphere, halon-1211 and halon-1301, have abundances about 100 times less than CFC-11 and CFC-12 and account for a significant fraction of bromine from all ODSs (see Figure Q7-1). Production and consumption of halons in developed countries ended in 1994 and that in developing countries ended by January 2010. In the 2005–2008 period, atmospheric abundances of halon-1211 showed a significant decrease for the first time. Halon-2402 abundances have been decreasing for a few years while those of halon-1301 continue to increase. The increase is likely due to substantial banks in fire-extinguishing and other equipment that gradually release halon-1301 to the atmosphere. The abundance of halon-1301 is expected to remain high well into the 21st century because of its long lifetime (65 years) and continued release.

► **Methyl chloroform.** The largest reduction to date in the abundance of an ODS (about 90% from its peak value) has been observed for methyl chloroform. Production and consumption of methyl chloroform in developed countries ended in January 1996 and that in developing countries

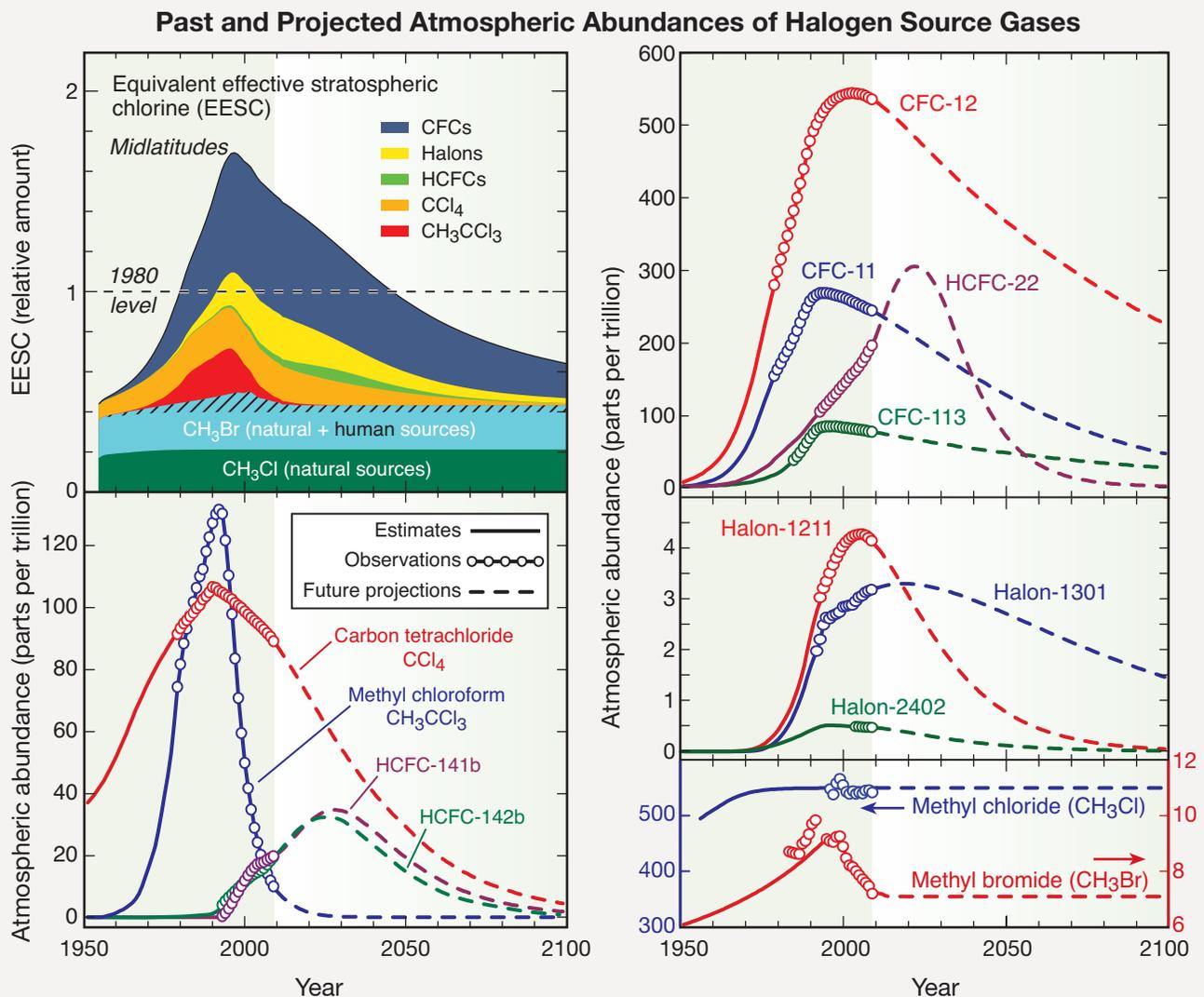


Figure Q16-1. Halogen source gas changes. The atmospheric abundances of individual ozone-depleting substances (ODSs) at Earth's surface were obtained using a combination of direct atmospheric measurements, estimates of historical abundance, and future projections of abundance. The gases shown are all ODSs except for methyl chloride. The past increases of CFCs, along with those of carbon tetrachloride, methyl chloroform, and halon-1211, have slowed and reversed in the last two decades. HCFCs, which are used as transitional substances to replace CFCs, will likely continue to increase in the coming decades before a complete phase-out. Halon-1301 abundances will also likely continue to grow in the next decade while current halon banks are depleted. Future decreases in methyl bromide are expected to be small. Abundances of methyl chloride, which is not controlled under the Montreal Protocol and has large natural sources, are projected to be constant in the future.

The rise in equivalent effective stratospheric chlorine (EESC) values in the 20th century has slowed and reversed in the last decade (top left panel). EESC is a measure of the potential for ozone depletion in the stratosphere derived from surface measurements of chlorine and bromine gases (see Q16). EESC values are reduced as ODS emissions decrease. EESC, as shown here for the stratosphere at midlatitudes, returns to 1980 values around 2050. In polar regions, the return to 1980 values occurs almost 10 years later. International compliance with the Montreal Protocol provisions will ensure that EESC values will continue to decrease as projected (see Q15). (The unit "parts per trillion" is defined in the caption of Figure Q7-1.)

is scheduled to end by January 2015. Atmospheric abundances responded rapidly to the reduced emissions starting in the mid-1990s because methyl chloroform has a short atmospheric lifetime (about 5 years). Methyl chloroform is used mainly as a solvent and has no significant long-term storage following production. It will approach complete removal from the atmosphere after the phase-out in developing countries is complete.

- ▶ **HCFC substitute gases.** The Montreal Protocol allows for the use of hydrochlorofluorocarbons (HCFCs) as short-term, transitional substitutes for CFCs and in other specific applications. As a result, the abundances of HCFC-22, HCFC-141b, and HCFC-142b continue to grow in the atmosphere with rates that have remained constant or increased in recent years in response to greater application demand. HCFCs pose a lesser threat to the ozone layer than CFCs because they have low ODP values (less than 0.12). The most recent Adjustment to the Montreal Protocol (Montreal 2007) accelerated the phase-out of HCFCs by a decade for both developed (2020) and developing countries (2030) (see Q15). Even with the accelerated phase-out, future projections show HCFC abundances that continue to increase, reach peak values before the mid-21st century, and steadily decrease thereafter. The response of atmospheric abundances to decreasing emissions will be relatively rapid because of short atmospheric lifetimes of HCFCs (less than 20 years).
- ▶ **Carbon tetrachloride.** Carbon tetrachloride has been phased out in both developed countries (January 1996) and developing countries (January 2010). As a result, atmospheric abundances of carbon tetrachloride have been decreasing for two decades. The decline is somewhat less rapid than expected, suggesting that actual emissions are larger than reported or the atmospheric lifetime is greater than current estimates. Production of carbon tetrachloride for use as raw material (feedstock) to make other chemicals is exempted under the Protocol because emission to the atmosphere does not occur in this case.
- ▶ **Methyl chloride and methyl bromide.** Both methyl chloride and methyl bromide are distinct among halogen source gases because substantial fractions of their emissions are associated with natural processes (see Q7). Methyl chloride is not an ODS under the Montreal Protocol because it is not manufactured or used in appreciable quantities. Its abundance in the atmosphere has remained fairly constant throughout the last 60 years and will remain constant if the balance of its natural production and loss processes

remains unchanged. Methyl bromide is controlled under the Protocol because it is manufactured for use as a fumigant. Developed country production and consumption of methyl bromide ended in January 2005 and that in developing countries is scheduled to end by January 2015. The Protocol currently provides exemptions for some methyl bromide production and use as an agricultural and pre-shipment fumigant. Atmospheric abundances of methyl bromide responded rapidly to the reduced emissions starting in 1999 because its atmospheric removal lifetime is less than 1 year. Future projections show only small changes in methyl bromide abundances based on the assumptions of unchanged contributions from natural sources and small use in developing countries. An important uncertainty in these projections is the future amounts that will be produced and emitted under Montreal Protocol use exemptions.

Equivalent effective stratospheric chlorine (EESC). Important measures of the success of the Montreal Protocol are the past and projected changes in the values of equivalent effective stratospheric chlorine (EESC), which was introduced in Figures Q14-1 and Q15-1. EESC is designed as one measure of the potential for ozone depletion in the stratosphere that can be calculated from atmospheric *surface abundances* of ODSs and natural chlorine and bromine gases. All gases used in the calculation are shown in Figure Q7-1. For both past and future EESC values, the required atmospheric abundances are derived from measurements, historical estimates, or future projections based on compliance with Montreal Protocol provisions.

EESC is expressed as a hypothetical amount of chlorine available in the stratosphere to deplete ozone. The term *equivalent* indicates that bromine gases, scaled by their greater per-atom effectiveness in depleting ozone, are included in EESC. The term *effective* indicates that only the estimated fraction of ODSs that are currently in the form of reactive halogen gases in the stratosphere is included in an EESC value (see Q8). Although chlorine is much more abundant in the stratosphere than bromine (about 150-fold) (see Figure Q7-1), bromine atoms are about 60 times more effective than chlorine atoms in chemically destroying ozone in the lower stratosphere. EESC generally depends on the year and latitude region in the stratosphere being considered.

Another quantitative measure of the potential for ozone depletion in the stratosphere that is highly related to EESC is *effective stratospheric chlorine* (ESC). ESC, as defined in Q20, is calculated with chemistry-climate models rather than directly from ODS observations.

Long-term changes in EESC. In the latter half of the 20th century up until the 1990s, EESC values steadily increased (see Figure Q16-1), causing global ozone depletion. As a result of the Montreal Protocol regulations, the long-term increase in EESC slowed, values reached a peak, and EESC began to decrease in the 1990s. The initial decrease came primarily from the substantial, rapid reductions in emissions of methyl chloroform, which has a lifetime of only 5 years. The decrease is continuing with declining emissions of CFCs and other long-lived ODSs. Decreasing EESC means that the potential

for stratospheric ozone depletion is now lessening each year as a result of the Montreal Protocol. Decreases in EESC are projected to continue throughout the 21st century if all nations continue to comply with the provisions of the Protocol. The decrease will continue because as emissions are reduced, natural processes continue to gradually remove halogen-containing gases from the global atmosphere. Reduction of EESC values to 1980 values or lower will require several more decades because the most abundant ODS molecules now in the atmosphere have lifetimes ranging from 10 to 100 years.