



IS JET TRAVEL BECOMING THE DIRTIEST WAY TO CROSS THE PLANET?

Video transcript: The carbon cost of flying

PROF DAVID MACKAY:

Well today flight contributes two percent of our carbon dioxide emissions globally, and it's growing. It's projected that the emissions associated with aviation under business as usual will grow by something like 3.5 percent per year all the way from now to 2050. That means that even if aviation is only a small part of the emissions budget today, it could be guzzling up something like half of the global emissions budget by 2050.

While that aviation growth is happening, at the same time global emissions need to be reducing eventually to zero – and people say by roughly 70 percent in 2050 – if we want to be on track to limiting climate change to two degrees.

The impact of aviation on climate change isn't just the carbon dioxide. Today's airplanes also emit nitrous oxide and other greenhouse gases, and it's uncertain exactly what the impact of those other emissions is, but it could be two times or four times as big as the CO₂ itself.