

These researchers are trying to stop misinformation from derailing climate progress | NPR

By Shannon Bond

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Sean Buchan has started every day of the past two weeks at his computer, tracking narratives about the COP26 U.N. climate summit.

He looks for claims like one about the electric cars ferrying dignitaries around Glasgow being powered by diesel generators. That isn't true: the cars were recharged by generators burning lower-emission vegetable oil.

"But that was subtly left out of the information when it was tweeted or posted, and it makes it seem like the whole of COP26 is running on diesel," Buchan said. "It's not false. But it is highly misleading."

Buchan, an analyst at the British climate-advocacy group Stop Funding Heat, is part of a global team of activists and online researchers that has been tracking false and misleading claims about climate change while world leaders have met in Glasgow.

The London-based Institute for Strategic Dialogue, which has long studied online extremism and terrorism, led the effort.

"Climate is being co-opted into this universe of antigovernment sentiment. It's being weaponized by groups that have extremist or conspiracist affiliations," said Jennie King, a senior policy manager at ISD who coordinated the team.

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