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Assessing ExxonMobil's global warming projections

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The performance of mainstream climate models has received extensive scrutiny. By contrast, climate projections by the fossil fuel industry have never been assessed. Based on recent archival discoveries, we quantitatively evaluate all available global warming projections documented by – and in many cases modeled by – Exxon and ExxonMobil Corp scientists between 1977 and 2003. We find that most of their projections accurately forecast warming consistent with subsequent observations. Their projections were also consistent with, and at least as skillful as, those of independent academic and government models. We find that Exxon and ExxonMobil Corp also correctly rejected the prospect of a coming ice age, accurately predicted when human-caused global warming would first be detected, and reasonably estimated the ‘carbon budget’ for holding warming below 2°C. Our results show that ExxonMobil predicted global warming correctly and that by the 1980s, they already knew how much global warming the company's products were likely to cause.