



Record-breaking hurricanes, tornadoes, and fires wreak havoc in U.S. and around the world

Disasters are attributed to climate change

by Claudia Levens

The year has not even ended, and climatologists have forecast that the natural disasters occurring in 2017 are on track to shatter records.

For the first nine months of 2017, the United States alone has endured 15 disasters, each costing \$1 billion or more and collectively claiming 323 lives.

They were all linked to weather and climate, according to data from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association.

The 1980–2016 annual average of “billion-dollar disasters” is 5.5 disasters. The annual average for the past 5 years is 11 disasters. 2011 currently holds the record with 16 billion-dollar disasters.

With 15 billion-dollar disasters, 2017 is approaching that record-setting year. The NOAA anticipates that the weather shows no sign of slowing down.

Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, Maria, along with numerous others, are 15 named cyclones. 9 have become hurricanes, and have left insurmountable destruction in their wake. The numbers are predicted to only grow.



Hurricane Irma hit South Carolina, as well as the U.S. Virgin Islands, Florida, Georgia, and North Carolina hard. |AP

Maria, a category 4 hurricane, has brought devastation to southeast Puerto Rico. Irma, category 4-5, struck the U.S. Virgin Islands and the Florida Keys. Harvey, category 4, inundated Houston, Texas with intense flooding over the course of seven days. Currently, Hurricane Ophelia is affecting Great Britain.

The hurricane season ends November 30. In the time between now and then, the NOAA has predicted that 2017 will break the 2005 record for the costliest hurricane season.

Hurricanes are not the only disasters wreaking havoc on both local communities and national economies.

In the western United States,

wildfires caused by droughts have burned 8.4 million acres of land and hundreds of homes, surpassing the 10-year annual average of 5.9 million acres. These fires have been the deadliest in California state history. As of Tuesday, they have amassed a death toll of 40.

North Dakota, South Dakota, and Montana have been experiencing a severe drought since this fall.

The drought has damaged crops, undermined agriculture, and has significantly contributed to the rampant wildfires. Overall, the drought has cost the U.S. \$2.5 billion.

The other 10 weather occurrences surpassing the billion-dollar mark appeared as severe

weather in the Midwest.

There were over a dozen tornadoes in Iowa, as well as hail and severe wind storms throughout the country in June. Missouri and Arkansas experienced severe flooding in May, and a freeze severely damaged early-blooming fruit crops in the southeast in March.

A tornado outbreak ravaged the country in both March and January. California experienced flooding in February.

North America is not the only continent to experience such levels of disaster.

Although they have not received the same media coverage, floods have killed over 1,200 people in Southeast Asia. 41 million have

been affected by them since June, according to the International Federation of Red Cross.

In East Africa, up to 400,000 people have been displaced by natural hazards including floods, droughts and landslides. What more, the lack of environmental resources, poor land-use planning, poverty, and water pollution make people in these areas especially vulnerable.

Although the number of these disasters keeps rising, far fewer people are dying as a consequence.

50 years ago, 200,000 people died annually as a result of natural disasters. That figure has been dramatically reduced, thanks to safety measures such as improved buildings and flood-prevention schemes.

It is currently difficult for climate scientists to discern exactly what has caused each of these climate occurrences.

However, climate change and anthropogenic causes have played a significant role, and will continue to cause natural disasters in the coming years.

Experts are currently searching for more precise conclusions about what is happening and what needs to be done. There is no denying that they will have an abundance of data to study from in 2017.

I didn't understand what global warming was. Good thing I do now

Climate change is a complex topic. Do your research

By Mia Sherin

On one rare occasion last year, I actually did my Spanish homework the night before it was due, rather than in the final thirty seconds of the passing period. That's right, bow down.

We were given twenty vocabulary words and were required to write a definition for each in Spanish. All of the words had to do with the environment. When it came time to define “global warming,” I wrote the first thing that came to my mind, and my assembly of notecards chugged on. I didn't think twice.

Later that day, I wished that I had.

In class, my partner and I shared our definitions as the other guessed the vocabulary word. I read my definition for global warming. He stared at me, puzzled, unsure of which vocabulary word I was describing. His finger scrolled up and down his vocabulary sheet, stopping at the bottom. He looked up at me.

“I was describing global warming,” I said plainly.

“No, you weren't,” he replied. “That's not the meaning of global warming.”

I looked down at my notecard and read the definition in my head. It was something along the lines of, “when the world is melting.” Yes, you read that correctly. That is what I thought global warming was. Last year. When I was a junior in high school. Okay, now we can move on.

“Mia, do you know what global

warming is?” my partner questioned.

Well...I know it's bad, and I know it's real...” I stuttered.

“That is the most liberal thing I have ever heard.”

To an extent, he was right. I didn't really know what global warming was, and I got any information I had from biased sources. I knew global warming was real because conservatives said it wasn't. I knew global warming was bad because Hillary Clinton told me so.

I urge you all to promote the education about climate change, starting with yourself

Not to say that global warming isn't real or isn't bad, but it was time for me to educate myself so that I could hold up important conversations on climate change. Or at least be able to write a definition of global warming for Spanish class.

No, I didn't go home and research global warming into the depths of the night with “Can't Hold Us” by Macklemore playing.

This was not a major-life-change movie scene. I learned about climate change slowly, having conversations with my family, friends, and peers with different political views.

I urge you all to promote education on climate change, starting with yourself. I understand that I am not the most qualified person to make this request, but I am qualified to say that it is easy to let yourself

remain ignorant on environmental issues.

Educating yourself does not just mean talking to your parents. It does not just mean talking to your friends with whom you agree on everything, even like what couples to root for on “Riverdale”. It means being uncomfortable.

Whether you are conservative, liberal, or somewhere in between, do not let yourself be put in a box because you lack a well-rounded view on the subject.

It is totally acceptable to align your views with your political affiliation, after you educate yourself. I still believe that climate change is “real” and “bad,” but now I know why. More importantly, I understand why others question this.

Basically, I am a perfect human being and have had an amazing comeback story, going from being completely ignorant on global warming to being a goddess on environmental issues. Okay, glad we got that out there.

We can promote education on climate change by talking to others. More often than not, people do not have bad intentions.

It is important to give them the benefit of the doubt, and assume that information is all they need. Not an eye roll.

I hope everyone is aware that I just made a total fool of myself. I was not dying to tell all my classmates that I thought global warming was “when the world is melting”. But hopefully this shows how easy it is to remain in your political bubble, or even just lack the basic facts on climate change. I've been there. Ask my Spanish class. They know.

Our colors are blue and green for a reason

by Arjun Thakkar

Above the Physical Plant Services room, a sign states the mission of the department: “to operate and maintain a school second to none.”

PPS is responsible for cleaning and maintenance on the two campuses. They work to facilitate a clean and safe environment for all students and staff.

One task that is especially important for PPS is the recycling effort at the school.

Erik Munson, Custodial Manager at Winnetka, explained how the group approaches conservation efforts: “We try to provide the option to recycle in the school. We don't have coverage in every room yet, in part due to the opening of the new building, but we're definitely working to reach that goal.”

Principal Dubravec said that new receptacles for recycling and trash were placed in the west wing to assist with this coverage.

Yet student compliance with expectations for disposing waste has been weak. It's not uncommon to see wrappers, cans, and other trash lying around the cafeteria and student commons, forcing staff members to pick up after careless teens.

Part of this carelessness within the student body arises from recent scrutiny regarding the role that recycling plays at the school.

Some students question whether or not we actually recycle, and whether there is any point to distinguish waste materials for recycling.

Munson dispelled these rumors. “Recycling is absolutely a part our maintenance process.”

According to Winnetka campus Facilities Manager Steve Linke, “the school has been recycling paper, glass, cans and cardboard for the past 15-20 years.”

For items to be recyclable at New Trier, they have to be made of paper, plastic, glass, cardboard material. These items must not be contaminated with food grease.

According to John Kelly, president of Trinity Environmental Resolutions, who works with Munson on the trash and recycling collection process, the materials are collected and sent to a multi-recyclable facility, then processed and sorted in Northbrook.

The school works with the Village of Winnetka, which picks up trash, as well as the company Lakeshore Recycling Systems, which picks up recyclable materials.

Munson said that PPS is willing to put additional recycling bins in rooms that do not have ones.

Ultimately, these conservation efforts have little impact if students aren't willing to properly separate their trash. This shouldn't be as difficult as it has proved.

Dubravec said that the administration is working to strengthen the school's waste disposal process from within the student body, referencing a future Student Alliance initiative.

She hopes to change students' habits of mind to create additional discipline.

“We can limit where students eat, and we can provide every opportunity for them to recycle with new waste bins, but if we don't change their habits of mind, then these restrictions won't have much of an impact,” said Dubravec.