

The Global Warming Blizzard Myth

By James M. Taylor

Faced with the embarrassment of record snowstorms this winter, global warming apologists are now telling us such blizzards prove the existence of global warming. Global warming computer models, we are told, predict a higher frequency of extreme weather events, such as heat waves, drought, floods, violent storms, and, yes, blizzards. The problem with this theory is that there is no such increase in extreme weather events in the real world.

High temperature extremes are not becoming more frequent. The all-time high temperature in Africa was set in 1922; in North America, 1913; in Asia, 1942; in Australia, 1889; in Europe, 1977; and in South America, 1920. In the United States, 30 of the 50 states experienced their all-time high temperature between 1910 and 1940. Fully 40 of the 50 states had their all-time high temperature before 1980.

Flooding events likewise show no sign of increase. National Climatic Data Center records show U.S. precipitation has increased nearly 10 percent in the past 115 years, but fully half of this increase occurred during the fall drought season, when the least amount of precipitation happens and an increase in precipitation would be most beneficial.

A study of stream flows and flooding events published in the April 2009 peer-reviewed *Journal of the American Water Resources Association* confirms this. “There is broad evidence ... for increased magnitudes of low and moderate flows both regionally and nationally,” while “trends in high flows have been much less evident,” the study concluded.

Nor is drought becoming a problem. Not only is precipitation—particularly precipitation during the fall drought season—becoming more dependable, but drought as a whole is in sharp decline. A study published in the May 2006 peer-reviewed *Geophysical Research Letters* reported, “Droughts have, for the most part, become shorter, less frequent, and cover a smaller portion of the country over the last century.”

A study in the March 2006 peer-reviewed *Journal of Hydrology* reached a similar conclusion. “Evidence indicates that summer soil moisture content has increased during the last several decades at almost all sites having long-term records in the Global Soil Moisture Data Bank.”

The oft-repeated claim that violent storms are becoming more numerous is also demonstrably false. National Weather Service records show the number of strong (F2 and higher) tornadoes in the United States has been declining for the past 35 years. Roughly twice as many strong tornadoes struck the nation during the 1960s and 1970s, when the globe was cooling, as struck in the 1990s and 2000s.

The hurricane record is similar. National Weather Service records show hurricanes struck the United States far more frequently in the late 1800s through the 1950s than has been the case since the 1960s. In fact, global hurricane frequency during the past two years was lower than at any time since at least the 1970s.

Which brings us back to blizzards. Global warming apologists are claiming this year's frequent blizzards and record snow amounts are evidence of global warming because warmer temperatures allow the air to hold more moisture, which in turn leads to heavier snow events. The problem with this theory is that North America has experienced one of its coldest winters in decades. It is certainly not warmer air this year that is causing more blizzards.

Moreover, prior winter snow records, such as Washington DC's prior record snowfall in 1899, were set during unusually cold winters, not unusually warm ones. The winter of 1899 was one of the coldest U.S. winters on record, especially during February when most of the record blizzards occurred.

Global warming apologists seek to blame anything and everything on global warming, but the assertion that global warming is causing more blizzards and extreme weather events simply does not stand up under objective analysis.

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