

THE NEW NORMAL: CHANGING SEASONS, CHANGING LIVES

Thinking and talking about extreme weather as our climate changes

This summer, many Americans are experiencing the impact of climate change. Steady increases in temperatures have already dramatically changed our seasonal weather patterns — including more severe droughts, storms, floods, and heat waves. This has consequences on our lives and livelihoods — and it's caused by climate change. What's the best way to make the connection between extreme weather and climate? This month's talking points offer some answers to help you:

1. **My heart goes out to the people affected by the extreme weather events we're having across America.** The wildfires in the west, hurricanes and floods in the south, and heat waves nationwide are impacting millions of us, and even more so our vulnerable populations including children, the elderly, and disadvantaged communities.
2. **Our seasons are changing, and extreme weather is quickly becoming the “new normal.”** But there is nothing normal about the intensity or frequency of these floods, fires, droughts, and storms.
3. **While some Americans are unsure about how much our changing climate is to blame, we can all agree that there has been visible change.** We rarely have record low temperatures anymore — it's always record highs.
4. **Warmer seasonal temperatures have consequences.** They create dryer conditions in some areas, wetter conditions in others, and increase the number and strength of heat waves, wildfires, floods, hurricanes and other extreme storms.
5. **Americans are paying the price for extreme weather and climate change with our lives and livelihoods, and we are concerned.** Extreme weather calamities are now costing us tens of billions of dollars each year, and threatening our property values, health and safety.
6. **We're not getting good information from trusted news sources on extreme weather and climate change, or what we can do about it.** It's time for us to move past partisanship, and focus on caring for each other and our communities.
7. **We don't just have to let this happen to us — we can do something about it.** There is so much we can all do to care for the people impacted, better prepare, and stop the pollution that is causing our climate to change.
8. **The impacts of extreme weather and climate change are tragic, but the solutions make me hopeful.** We care for each other when tragedy strikes. Let's also work together to strengthen our communities with climate solutions like energy efficiency, smarter transportation, and cleaner energy.

COUNTERPOINTS

Following are the current arguments against the link between a changing climate and changing weather, with some simple, effective ways to respond.

- 1. You can't prove that what I see out my window is caused by climate change!**
Response: What we see out of our windows today is different from what we saw just a few years ago. Georgia peaches are being grown in Illinois and weathercasters now talk about monsoon season in Arizona. We can't blame any one event just on climate change, but we can say it is changing our seasons and weather.
- 2. It's always hot in summer time. This is just business as usual.**
Response: All across America, summers (and winters!) are getting warmer and warmer. NASA and NOAA have daily temperature records for your community. You don't have to trust me, you can just look it up.
- 3. I can't notice any change in the seasons or the weather. It must not be happening.**
Response: Most of us are insulated from changing seasons and weather. But the farmers that grow our food, people who depend on snow for their livelihood, and outdoor workers all can tell you that things are changing.
- 4. Even if climate change is making the weather worse, there is nothing that I can do.**
Response: Taking action on climate and preparing for extreme weather are things that we can all do. We can all be part of the solution. Conserving energy, recycling, and walking or biking more can help. We can also ask for clean energy choices, such as wind and solar power. And, we can get involved in preparation and planning for extreme weather events, whether it is for our families or in our communities. These improvements will protect us against climate change, strengthen our communities, bring good jobs, and help ensure the health and wellbeing of our children and future generations.

For more information on the impacts of climate change on human health in the United States, check out the [U.S. Global Change Research Program's Scientific Assessment](#).