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Leading Forecasting Group Finds No Rise in Extreme Weather; Challenges Perception of Catastrophic Global Warming

WASHINGTON, DC -- No convincing evidence exists to support claims that hurricanes, tornadoes and other extreme temperature and precipitation events are on the rise, according to a new report by Accu-Weather, the world's top commercial weather firm. The finding seriously challenges perceptions that global warming is leading to an increase in hurricanes, floods and other weather-related catastrophes.

Proponents of global warming theories suggest that recent events, such as Hurricane Andrew, devastating floods in the Midwest and the brutal winter storms that struck the Northeast last year, are signs that weather is becoming increasingly extreme. The cause, they say, is human-induced global warming.

After reviewing comprehensive global weather data, interviewing key scientists and surveying the scientific literature, Accu-Weather experts say there is no convincing evidence that global weather is becoming more extreme.

According to the report's co-author and Accu-Weather senior vice president, Dr. Joseph Sobel, "Scientific evidence squarely disputes the hypothesis that hurricanes are becoming stronger and more frequent, that tornadoes have increased in number, and that droughts and floods are becoming more common. In fact, the data show that hurricane frequency is not increasing, the number of violent tornadoes is not increasing, and temperature and precipitation extremes are no more common now than they were 50 to 100 years ago."

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The report attributes the appearance of an increase in extreme weather to two factors: the increase in housing and related development along coastal areas, and the ability of scientists (through satellites and improved computer technology) and the media to report quickly on extreme weather events worldwide.

According to co-author and Accu-Weather consulting meteorologist, Norm MacDonald, "Hurricanes and floods today often do more financial damage than in the past, because more people live in coastal areas and property values are higher. It is interesting to note that fewer people today are killed by extreme weather events, because our ability to alert and prepare for storms is enormously improved."

MacDonald added, "The world is much smaller today, as well, thanks to the media's ability to bring us the news from any corner of the globe. As a result, we hear about or see on television more stories about devastating floods, hurricanes, droughts and so on. This contributes to the illusion of an increase in these events. But the illusion is easily shattered by the facts."

On the question of global warming, the report's authors agree with most climate experts that global temperatures have risen slightly (about one degree Fahrenheit) over the past century. However, they conclude that the small temperature increase is not in phase with the increases in so-called greenhouse gases. The authors note that the majority of the slight temperature increase occurred before 1940, while the majority of greenhouse emissions occurred well after 1940.

Journalists may obtain a copy of the report by calling Jennifer Davick at (202) 628-3622.

The Global Climate Coalition is an organization of more than 50 business trade associations and private companies established in 1989 to coordinate business participation in the scientific and policy debate on the global climate change issue.

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