

## **Climate change is a deadly threat**

Telegraph Herald (Dubuque, IA)

April 1, 2021 Thursday

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**Section:** A; Pg. 4

**Length:** 574 words

### **Body**

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I enjoyed Milli Gilbaugh's column in the March 18 Solon Economist, with its remembrances of winters past and the coming of spring, some of which match my own memories. However, I felt the column's title "What global warming?" and the byline questioning why we were concerned about Earth's climate getting warmer, were unfortunate.

One might think that this past winter's frigid weather negated the concept of global warming, also known as climate change. But unfortunately, local weather events do not exonerate global climate trends, which are defined by average worldwide temperature readings collected since the 1870s, when such measurements commenced. Indeed, NOAA's global temperature maps clearly show that while Iowa and much of the U.S. were shivering through February, eastern Canada and much of Europe had unusually balmy weather, with swaths of China measuring in at seven to nine degrees Fahrenheit above the long-term norm.

Careful consideration of thousands of daily temperatures clearly shows that our planet's average temperature is now 2.09° F above the 20th century average, with most of that rise coming since 1980. That's global warming.

A rise of 2 degrees may seem inconsequential, it's so small. But unfortunately, it's enough to already be hitting us where it hurts— for example, in our bodies, by lengthening and intensifying allergies (warming temperatures are signaling plants to produce more pollen over a longer time period). And in our pocketbooks: last August's derecho, the worst thunderstorm in U.S. history, left Iowa with an astounding \$7.5 billion in damages. (Storms this severe or worse are predicted to increase as climate change worsens.) And even on our flooding landscapes: researchers have connected our state's severe 2019 floods to the northward flow of increasing amounts of atmospheric moisture evaporating from the warming Gulf of Mexico, a process they call the "Midwest water hose."

Thousands of trained scientists around the globe are figuring out more about climate change effects every day. Consider February's extreme cold, when a massive thumb of Arctic fridity leaked southward through Canada into the Midwest and lingered here.

Why? Because as the Arctic warms and the Polar Vortex slows and weakens, it allows the chilling air spinning above the North Pole to spill into temperate regions.

The effects of climate change are increasing, and they will continue to worsen as long as we persist in warming the atmosphere by burning fossil fuels.

With California's wildfires, strengthening hurricanes, increasing toxic algae blooms closing our beaches, new disease-carrying insects moving into a warming Midwest, and countless other effects, climate change is morphing from an annoyance into a deadly threat, one that many call the "largest existential threat humanity has ever faced."

That's why it shouldn't be dismissed or even treated like a joke.

Climate change can be difficult to understand, but fortunately we have excellent government websites to help us out. Just google "EPA climate change," for example. For more information, flip through the Fourth National

Climate change is a deadly threat

**Climate** Assessment, assembled by over 20 federal and other agencies and institutions, and released by the Trump administration in 2017. Then consider what each of us can do to mitigate **climate change**, so that perhaps someday, we can say (as both Milli and I want to do), "Global warming? What global warming?"

Connie Mutel

Solon

## Classification

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**Language:** ENGLISH

**Publication-Type:** Newspaper

**Subject:** GLOBAL WARMING (91%); **CLIMATE CHANGE** (90%); CLIMATOLOGY (90%); EXTREME TEMPERATURES (89%); WEATHER (89%); ALGAL BLOOMS (78%); EARTH & ATMOSPHERIC SCIENCE (78%); HISTORY (78%); OCEANOGRAPHIC & ATMOSPHERIC SERVICES (78%); SEVERE WIND (76%); FIRES (68%); WILDFIRES (63%); SEAWEED & ALGAE (62%); INSECTS & ARACHNIDS (50%)

**Industry:** GLOBAL WARMING (91%); ENERGY & UTILITIES (78%)

**Geographic:** IOWA, USA (93%); EARTH (92%); MIDWEST USA (91%); ATLANTIC OCEAN (79%); CALIFORNIA, USA (79%); ARCTIC (92%); CANADA (90%); UNITED STATES (76%)

**Load-Date:** April 1, 2021

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