In Our View Impact of climate change is felt close to home

The Columbian (Vancouver, Washington)

July 7, 2019 Sunday

Section: EDITORIAL; Pg. C8

Length: 584 words

Body

The new normal suggests that wildfires are increasingly impacting Southwest Washington. With ***climate change*** helping to turn forests into kindling, fires are growing in intensity and frequency - a trend that ***climate*** scientists believe will continue.

That is just one of the repercussions of a ***changing climate***. And it presents a jumping-off point for a discussion that often appears too broad for us to wrap our heads around. At times, the breadth of ***climate change*** can be overwhelming to the point where the natural instinct is dismissiveness.

Last week, epidemiologist Kathleen Lovgren of Clark County Public Health briefed county officials on the impact of the 2017 Eagle Creek Fire in the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area. The department's research found that emergency room visits increased both here and in Multnomah County as the fire delivered smoke and ash to the region.

"Exposure to wildfire smoke can lead to exacerbations of asthma and COPD, especially from people who already suffer from those conditions," Lovgren said. "There's a possible association with cardiovascular events such as heart attacks and strokes and a growing body of evidence to show association with pneumonia and bronchitis and other respiratory infections. But there's a lot more research we still need and lot more questions we have."

The Eagle Creek Fire was not caused by ***climate change***. It was sparked by a Vancouver teen throwing fireworks into a wooded area. But ***climate change*** is creating conditions conducive to wildfires, and metro areas throughout the state are increasingly encased in a smoky haze during summer.

That is one of the micro effects of ***climate change***. But the macro effects also are appearing dire.

Last week, consulting firm Moody's Analytics released a report suggesting that ***climate change*** could inflict $69 trillion of damage on the global economy by the year 2100. The report warns that rising temperatures will "universally hurt worker health and productivity" and that extreme weather events "will increasingly disrupt and damage critical infrastructure and property." Left unchecked, global warming will diminish human health, labor productivity, agriculture and tourism.

Despite extreme economic predictions, the issue often remains difficult to comprehend. As Mark Zandi, Moody's chief economist, told The Washington Post: "That's why it is so hard to get people focused on this issue and get a comprehensive policy response. Business is focused on the next year, or five years out."

Moody's scenario might appear excessively alarmist. But it is supported by science.

Last year, the federal government's Fourth National ***Climate*** Assessment predicted the U.S. economy will shrink by as much as 10 percent by the end of the century if ***climate change*** continues unabated. And in 2017, a report from the Universal Ecological Fund determined that extreme weather had cost the United States at least $240 billion a year over the previous 10 years.

Naysayers dismiss such predictions and assessments as fear-mongering while suggesting that ***changes*** to the ***climate*** are part of the earth's natural cycle. But a vast majority of scientists who have studied the issue say human activity - particularly the burning of fossil fuels - has exacerbated the scenario.

Yes, the scope of the issue, of trying to comprehend ***climate change*** on a global scale, can be daunting. But looking at it from a local perspective such as the cough-inducing haze from wildfires can help bring the point a little closer to home.

Classification

Language: ENGLISH

Publication-Type: Newspaper

Subject: ***CLIMATE CHANGE*** (93%); CLIMATOLOGY (91%); RESPIRATORY DISORDERS & INJURIES (91%); EARTH & ATMOSPHERIC SCIENCE (90%); FIRES (90%); FOREST FIRES (90%); FORESTS & WOODLANDS (90%); SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY (90%); WILDFIRES (90%); ECONOMIC CONDITIONS (89%); REPORTS, REVIEWS & SECTIONS (89%); TRENDS (89%); ECONOMY & ECONOMIC INDICATORS (85%); PRODUCTIVITY (85%); ECOLOGY & ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE (78%); GLOBAL WARMING (78%); GLOBALIZATION (78%); SEVERE WEATHER (78%); WEATHER (78%); ECONOMICS (77%); PUBLIC HEALTH (76%); PUBLIC HEALTH ADMINISTRATION (76%); COUNTIES (75%); COUNTY GOVERNMENT (75%); INFECTIOUS DISEASE (75%); PNEUMONIA (75%); HEART DISEASE (72%); CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE (70%); EPIDEMIOLOGY (70%); MEDICINE & HEALTH (70%); PUBLIC OFFICIALS (70%); STROKES (70%); EMERGENCY ROOMS (69%); ASTHMA (68%); BUSINESS NEWS (68%); CHRONIC OBSTRUCTIVE PULMONARY DISEASE (68%); CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASE (67%); US FEDERAL GOVERNMENT (63%); GOVERNMENT & PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION (62%); EDITORIALS & OPINIONS (59%)

Company: MOODY'S ANALYTICS INC (53%); GRAHAM HOLDINGS CO (52%)

Ticker: GHC (NYSE) (52%)

Industry: NAICS522390 OTHER ACTIVITIES RELATED TO CREDIT INTERMEDIATION (53%); SIC6099 FUNCTIONS RELATED TO DEPOSITORY BANKING, NEC (53%); NAICS517311 WIRED TELECOMMUNICATIONS CARRIERS (52%); NAICS515120 TELEVISION BROADCASTING (52%); NAICS511120 PERIODICAL PUBLISHERS (52%); NAICS511110 NEWSPAPER PUBLISHERS (52%); GLOBAL WARMING (78%); PUBLISHING (73%); EPIDEMIOLOGY (70%); EMERGENCY ROOMS (69%)

Geographic: WASHINGTON, USA (92%); UNITED STATES (94%)

Load-Date: October 12, 2021