

Weather extremes should spur action

Star Tribune (Minneapolis, MN)

July 25, 2021 Sunday

METRO EDITION

Copyright 2021 Star Tribune All Rights Reserved

Section: NEWS; Pg. 12A

Length: 654 words

Highlight: Political consensus on **climate change** must reflect the scientific consensus on the need for mitigation.

Body

Last week's headlines didn't herald an era of weather extremes. They confirmed it.

"More extreme, violent weather is in the offing" and "Drought forces state to limit water use" read Monday front-page headlines on two Star Tribune stories.

"As Frozen Land Burns, Siberia Trembles" read an alarming account the same day in the New York Times, which also reported on a "desperate Napa Valley" in "Fire, Drought and Heat Scorch the Land of Reds and Whites."

It wasn't fire but water that led to Thursday's grim account in the Times headlined "A Somber Toll As Record Rain Swamps China," while western Europe was the subject of separate Times story headlined "As Death Toll Mounts, Merkel Visits Flood Region and Vows to Rebuild." Showing her characteristic grit, the German chancellor toured ravaged villages and said, "The German language has no words, I think, for the devastation."

What most Germans do understand are the words "**climate change**." And unlike some U.S. politicians, they're not afraid to say them or act upon them.

"All politicians already said we have to redouble our efforts in **climate-change** mitigation and **climate-change** preparedness," Wolfgang Mössinger, the consul general of the Federal Republic of Germany in Chicago, told an editorial writer.

In fact, added Mössinger, it is one of the top issues in Germany's September election, and all parties, except for the far-right Alternative for Germany, "are unanimous that they have to do something." The issues, he said, "are more now how to do it and not anymore whether we have to do it, because many, many people in Germany think that this is the burning issue of the day."

Here, too, it's the burning issue of the day - and of an increasingly uncertain future - according to **climate** scientists and some citizens. But the kind of political and social consensus in Germany and so many other countries is lacking in the U.S.

Deniers and skeptics may point to the difficulty in proving that any one event is tied to **climate change**. But a warming world increases the likelihood of extreme events, Jessica Hellmann, the director of the University of Minnesota's Institute on the Environment, told an editorial writer.

"When you shift the [temperature] average, you will also get more extremes," Hellmann said. Or, in more colloquial terms, "When you juice the system, you will get crazy events more frequently."

Weather extremes should spur action

Reflecting scientists' concern over an even speedier process than predicted, Hellmann said that "from an [extremes] point-of-view, we're experiencing climate change quicker than you might otherwise think, or the models initially suggested."

So front-page New York Times headlines like "A Wildfire So Overwhelming That It Controls the Weather," a Tuesday story about Oregon's "Bootleg Fire," may become more frequent. So, too, might the impact here from such fires. The air quality in normally pristine Minnesota was among the nation's worst last week due to the smoke and haze from Canadian wildfires.

The enduring heat is yet another reminder that relatively wealthier countries aren't immune from climate change-induced events.

"Don't assume you are safe from it" or that "it will happen somewhere else," Hellman said. "And I think for places like Minnesota, we think, 'Well, you know our climate's pretty moderate, and we have a lot of water,' you feel probably pretty secure relative to other climates. But the Pacific northwest and western Germany, those are not marginal climates."

Faster fallout from climate change calls for expedited action. And it's not anti-business to mitigate climate-change risks. It can and should be an investment in our future. Indeed, averting action can retard economic growth, as evidenced by a Wednesday Times story headlined: "A Utah Town Halts Growth. It Lacks the Water."

But taking action necessitates more political consensus.

The data-driven scientific consensus is overwhelming. So, this summer, is just a walk outside.

Classification

Language: ENGLISH

Publication-Type: Newspaper

Subject: CLIMATE CHANGE (90%); CLIMATOLOGY (90%); DROUGHT (90%); SEVERE WEATHER (90%); REPORTS, REVIEWS & SECTIONS (89%); EARTH & ATMOSPHERIC SCIENCE (78%); FAR RIGHT POLITICS (78%); GERMAN POLITICAL PARTIES (78%); WRITERS (77%); GERMAN CHANCELLORS (73%); WILDFIRES (72%); EMBASSIES & CONSULATES (65%); EDITORIALS & OPINIONS (57%); EDITORIAL (%); SCIENCE (%); WEATHER (%); ENVIRONMENT (%)

Industry: WRITERS (77%)

Geographic: NAPA VALLEY, CA, USA (79%); MINNESOTA, USA (93%); GERMANY (92%); EUROPE (79%); UNITED STATES (79%); WESTERN EUROPE (79%)

Load-Date: July 28, 2021