

Global 'Weirding': What's Behind the Wicked Weather

Some say it's global warming. Others say 2011 has seen so much weird weather, it's global "weirding."

The year began with massive snowstorms and incredibly cold weather. Then as spring came, wild weather pushed disaster after disaster across the American heartland.

Epic fires burned more than 2.5 million acres in tinder-dry Texas. Near record-breaking floods drove the Mississippi and other rivers far out of their banks. All of that was followed by the legion of deadly tornadoes, killing more people than in any year since 1950.

Environmental Payback?

"This has been totally devastating," said Rich Serino, FEMA deputy administrator, surveying the damage left behind by the massive tornado that crushed much of Joplin, Mo.

"We look at each disaster on its own merit and this one is certainly among the worst that I've ever seen."

Missourian Tony Evans opined: "We've been taking the earth for granted, you know. I guess it's paying us back."

Some say the earth is paying humanity back because they believe in global warming, something they say is partly brought on by humans.

"This year has really been the perfect year for tornadoes," said Heidi Cullen, a climatologist and believer in global warming. "More extreme events like droughts, heat waves, wildfires—those are phenomenon that we very much expect to see more of as we move into a warmer world," she told CBN News.

Global Cooling

But meteorologists like Joe Bastardi, known as one of America's most accurate forecasters, have a completely different explanation. He blames the wild clashes of weather on an overall trend toward a colder earth.

"We've always had cycles of up and down," Bastardi told CBN News, "and when you change the cycle from what was a warm cycle toward a colder cycle, that's when you're going to get the biggest fights."

He noted that violent weather has come as the upper atmosphere experiences the biggest one-year temperature drop on record.

"And the lower levels of the atmosphere are cooling, but not quite as fast; the atmosphere becomes more unstable," he said.

Other scientists also say that because of unusual weather conditions this year, the cold air left over from the brutal northern winter has mixed in with the warmer air in the south, and that combination has led to these massive storms.

And what about the future? Bastardi, who works from his home in State College, Pa, with the private forecasting firm

Weatherbell, states that although many are worried about global warming, people instead should be bracing for colder weather in the decades ahead. And, he says, that isn't good.

"The problem is that cold is worse than warm on people," Bastardi explained. "There's a lot more food growing where it's warm than where it's cold. Have you noticed that we're up here in Pennsylvania and there are no orange groves in my backyard?"

No Controlling the Weather

Bastardi believes the earth's climate is much too vast and complex for man to ever control its ups and downs.

"The climate is never steady," he said, using Wisconsin as an example.

"In Wisconsin, we've had glaciers and we've also had rain forests, alright? So theoretically the range in this majestic creation in Wisconsin is that someday they could have rain forests again," Bastardi explained. "Someday they could have glaciers again."

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