



THE CLIMATE CONNECTION

Evidence of climate change is all around us—bigger wildfires, stronger hurricanes, more intense heatwaves, and more.

But too often climate is absent from extreme weather reporting. Use this handy guide to set your coverage straight.

There are all kinds of reasons that journalists ignore climate change. **Have you ever thought:**

“I’m unsure how climate change is responsible for this event.”

BUT REALLY...

Direct attribution to a single incidence of extreme weather is possible—but it’s tricky and can take time. Science is never-the-less explicit that climate change sets the conditions for extreme weather to be more likely. That’s a fact you can include in your reporting now.

“I don’t want to seem like an activist.”

BUT REALLY...

Climate change is critical context for understanding extreme weather. It’s not activist to mention it, it’s accurate.

“Don’t people already know about climate change? Isn’t it obvious?”

BUT REALLY...

Studies from the Yale Program on Climate Change Communication show that people believe in and care about climate change, but very few understand the scope or urgency of the problem, especially in the US. Extreme weather coverage is a can’t-miss opportunity to educate.

“I’m on deadline, and there’s no space in my story.”

BUT REALLY...

The climate connection can be made quickly. It doesn’t need to dominate your coverage, nor distract from other vital information audiences need during an emergency. Sometimes, a single sentence or phrase will do!

So, don’t be afraid. Go ahead and make the connection!

Here’s some simple language to help:

- This [heatwave] is exactly the sort of extreme weather that scientists around the world associate with climate change/ a warming planet.
- This [hurricane] comes at a time when human-caused climate change is consistently making storms like it more intense.

You can also try a clever analogy or turn of phrase:


Climate change isn’t solely to blame for extreme weather, but...


- it **stacks the deck** against us.
- it’s **baked in** with our weather, and often **a key ingredient** in the outcome.
- supercharges normal weather patterns, **like steroids**.


INSIDER TIP


Emphasizing the human impacts of extreme weather can help drive home the significance of climate change. If you’re covering how an extreme weather event is affecting marginalized people especially, be sure to also note that this is characteristic of climate change. Evidence shows it will impact the poor, communities of color, and Indigenous groups first and worst.

Here are some examples of journalists like you making **THE CLIMATE CONNECTION:**

 **On Pakistan’s devastating floods:** “A third of the country underwater. More than 1,000 people killed... Experts and local officials have drawn a direct line to human-made climate change, saying it illustrates how countries with the lowest contributions to the global crisis are becoming increasingly vulnerable to its effects.” — [Mushtaq Yusufzai and team for NBC News](#)

 **On Hurricane Ian, which rocked Florida:** “Storms like Ian are more likely because of human-caused climate change. Heat is the fuel that makes hurricanes big, powerful and rainy... As humans burn fossil fuels and release huge amounts of carbon dioxide...the air gets hotter, and the ocean water gets hotter. When a baby hurricane forms in the Atlantic, all that heat is available to help the storm grow.” — [Rebecca Hersher for NPR](#)

 **On heat in the American West:** “Fueled by climate change, the first major heat wave of the summer has seized the western United States, toppling records and threatening lives.” — [Sarah Kaplan in The Washington Post](#)

 **YOU’VE GOT THIS!** Remember, an extreme weather story that doesn’t mention climate change is incomplete and potentially even inaccurate. The good news? Making the connection is easy!

Now you, too, can make **THE CLIMATE CONNECTION**

 **Covering Climate Now**