

Has the media climate scare finally peaked?

People are realizing: Weather has always been variable

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For years, we have been told that every hurricane, wildfire, drought, flood and heat wave is proof that humanity is spiraling toward “climate catastrophe.” The public may have finally had enough. An unlikely piece of evidence comes from an equally unlikely source: The Guardian newspaper, one of the world’s most bombastic promoters of climate alarmism. In a recent article, the paper complained that nearly three-quarters of British news stories about the June heat wave never mentioned climate change.

To The Guardian, this represented a journalistic failure. To me, it may represent something far more important: the beginning of the end of climate hype on journalistic autopilot.

The Guardian reported that researchers examined nearly 2,500 heat wave stories published by nine major British newspapers and found that about 72% contained no mention of climate change. Even fewer attempted to connect the weather to Britain’s net-zero policies.

Climate activists were clearly disappointed. They expected every hot day to become another sermon about carbon emissions.

Instead, many editors simply reported the weather. That should not be remarkable, and for most of the history of journalism, it has not been.

Somewhere along the way, however, weather reporting became climate reporting. A thunderstorm was no longer just a thunderstorm. A wildfire was not simply the product of drought, fuel loads, wind, arson or human negligence.

A hurricane often became evidence of climate change before the floodwaters had even receded. Heat waves became perhaps the easiest narrative of all. If temperatures climbed above normal for a few days, the climate crisis had supposedly arrived.

Historical perspective about even bigger past weather events disappeared, natural variability as a cause became an inconvenience and computer models replaced observations. A growing class of organizations emerged with one purpose: to attribute individual weather events to human caused climate change.

The most prominent of the “sky is falling” promoters cited by the media is the international research collaboration World Weather Attribution. Within days, sometimes hours, of almost every major weather event, it produces a study estimating how much climate change contributed to that event. Those reports receive enormous amounts of media attention despite relying heavily on climate models rather than direct observations.

They are treated less as hypotheses than as verdicts to shape “we told you so”-style articles. Journalists rarely ask the obvious question: What else would an organization called World Weather Attribution be concluding?

This does not mean that every attribution study is necessarily wrong. It does mean that reporters should approach them with the same skepticism they would apply to any advocacy group whose mission is aligned with a particular conclusion. Too often, they do not.

Instead, weather stories are now climate stories, and they have become remarkably predictable. Scientists are quoted. Models are cited. Climate change is declared the culprit. The article ends with a call for more aggressive climate policy.

Wash, rinse, repeat. The public notices. After years of hearing that every unusual weather event is caused by climate change, many readers have become skeptical — not because they deny the existence of climate change, but because they recognize that weather has always been variable.

People remember severe heat waves before the climate narrative dominated the headlines. They remember devastating hurricanes decades ago. They remember droughts that came and went and floods that broke records long before atmospheric carbon dioxide became a political issue.

History has a way of puncturing claims of unprecedented events. Editors understand something else too: Readers eventually tire of being lectured. It is the same symptom that people in the storm-prone Midwest experience: warning fatigue.

Newspapers survive by keeping readers engaged, not by endlessly repeating the same message. If British editors increasingly choose to report a heat wave without automatically inserting a paragraph about climate change, they may simply be responding to audience fatigue.

Readers want to know how hot it will be, how long the heat will last and how to stay cool. Most do not need another reminder that every weather story is also supposed to be a morality lecture about the use of fossil fuels.

Ironically, The Guardian's own article suggests this shift is already underway. It proudly notes that it mentioned climate change in roughly half of its own heat-wave stories while criticizing newspapers such as the Daily Mail, the Sun, the Mirror and the Daily Express for doing so far less frequently.

Perhaps those editors are not failing journalism. Perhaps they are rediscovering it.

Good reporting begins with facts, not predetermined conclusions. Sometimes extreme weather warrants discussion in the context of climate change, but at other times it does not. Automatically attaching climate change to every weather event does not educate readers; it conditions them to expect advocacy disguised as reporting.

The irony is impossible to miss. The Guardian intended its article as a warning that the media are failing to widely spread the climate message. Many readers will see something different.

They will see evidence that editors are finally recognizing a simple truth that journalists once understood instinctively: Not every heat wave is a climate story. Sometimes, it is just summer.

If that realization is beginning to spread through newsrooms, it may mark the moment when the public's appetite for climate alarmism finally peaks. If that is the case, it will be one of the healthiest developments in journalism we have seen in years.

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