

Report Says Washington is in Store For More Rain, Floods, and Fires

Local News

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SEATTLE, Wash. - August was the second hottest month in 30 years for planet Earth, and will now be drenched, according to researchers, who also advise Washingtonians to look for a soggy-than-normal fall. A new report blames these extremes, at least in part, on the warming climate.

From the floods in Pakistan to the wildfires in Russia, severe weather events have made news headlines worldwide this year, notes Anastasia Schemkes with the *Sierra Club*. Her organization sees these events as reasons to move more quickly to curb global warming pollution, she says.

"These events are all sort of sounding this alarm and providing us with warnings - the same warnings that scientists are really trying to tell us so we can prevent the worst impacts in our state."

Schemkes says it's impossible to prove that any single event is related to climate change, but the patterns and trends are worth noting. The report says for Washington, a warmer climate brings the possibility of more frequent downpours, more severe heat waves and more acreage burned by wildfires.

The report is being released just as the Obama Administration is set to announce a new set of fuel efficiency standards. Right now, new cars need to reach 35 miles per gallon by 2016. Kristina Dumas, a field assistant with *Environment Washington*, says it's time to look beyond that.

"What we're trying to do right now is urge President Obama to pass new fuel efficiency standards for cars and trucks that would ensure the average new car can travel 60 miles on a gallon of gas by 2025. This would also save Washingtonians money at the pump and slash our oil consumption."

Auto industry groups are saying the request for 60-miles-per-gallon vehicles is premature, when they're still working to meet the current standard in the next five years. The conservation groups contend that the industry already has the technology to do it.

The report is online at www.environmentwashington.org. The climate statistics are from the University of Alabama-Huntsville and the University of Washington Climate Impacts Group.