US Government Photo

Government issues warnings, but are rising temperatures a health risk?

By Steve Goreham

Originally published in *The Washington Times*

Last Friday, the National Climate Assessment and Development Advisory Committee (NCADAC) issued a draft report titled "Climate Change and the American People." The report was produced by the 60-person NCADAC and supported by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration of our federal government. The report concludes that "Climate change is already affecting the American people" and that US communities will face "economic or health-related challenges." Sadly, common sense is hard to find in the 1146-page document.

The report is driven by the misguided ideology of Climatism, the belief that man-made greenhouse gases are destroying Earth's climate. According to Climatism, Earth's climate has been unchanging for thousands of years, but carbon dioxide emissions from human society are now causing dangerous global warming. Further, any change in Earth's climate must be bad for US citizens.

The document uses the word "extreme" more than 600 times to create an alarming picture of the future. It predicts "extreme heat events…extreme weather…extreme

snowstorms…extreme winds…extreme drought…extreme floods…extreme rainfall" and many other "extremes," all claimed to be due mankind's relatively small emissions of CO_2, a trace gas in our atmosphere. The report's conclusions are based on computer model projections.
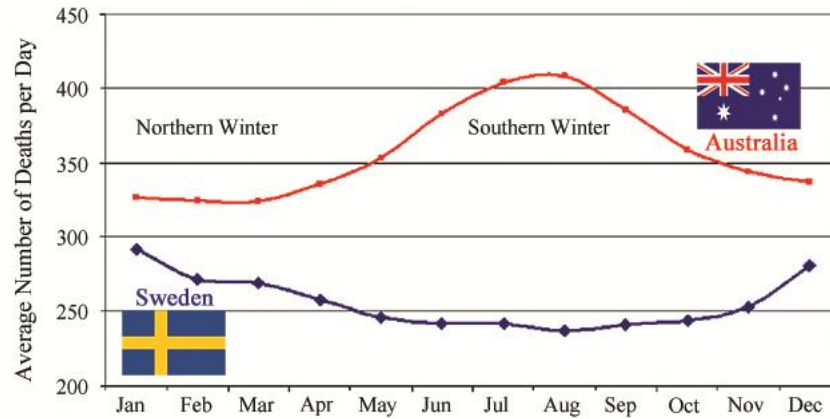
Yet, there is no empirical evidence to show that US climate events are becoming more severe. When Hurricane Sandy devastated New York City last year, it was only a Category 1 storm in terms of wind speed. No strong hurricane (Category 3 winds or stronger) has made landfall in the US during the last seven years, the longest such period on record. The count of strong to violent US tornadoes has been flat to declining over the last 30 years. Even a chart on page 59 of the NCADAC report shows that US droughts were most severe during the 1930s and 1950s.

It would take a PhD thesis to refute all the unsupported assertions in the report, so let's focus on just one—the claim that warm temperatures are a health risk for US citizens. In Chapter 9, the document states, "Extreme heat events have long threatened public health in U.S. metropolitan areas…climate projections indicate that extreme heat events will be more frequent and intense in coming decades." The chapter goes on to conclude that climate change will cause an "increase in heat-related deaths."

The computer models cited in the NCADAC report estimate, on average, that global temperature will increase by 3^oC (5.4^oF) by the year 2100. According to the report, this will be a health hazard for U.S. citizens due to extreme heat waves. The average temperature in Chicago is 49^oF and the average temperature in St. Louis is 56^oF, a difference of 3.9^oC. Are more people dying in St. Louis due to this "extreme" temperature difference?

Earlier this month, I flew to Houston with a planeload of coughing and sneezing passengers. The news media reports that we're in the midst of an influenza epidemic. The Center for Disease Control defines the US flu season to be from October to March. According to the World Health Organization of the United Nations, the flu season for the Southern Hemisphere is from April to October, during their winter months. Could it be that cold climate has a greater negative impact on human health than warmer climate?

In fact, scientific studies show that more people get sick in cold weather and more people die as a result. The late Dr. William Keating of Queen Mary and Westfield College led a team that studied temperature-related deaths for people aged 65 to 74 in six European nations. Keating's team found that deaths related to cold temperatures were more than nine times greater than those related to hot temperatures in Europe. Heart attacks, strokes, and respiratory illness were responsible for most of the cold-weather deaths.

Temperature-Related Deaths in Australia and Sweden (Falagas, 2009)
The Mad, Mad, Mad World of Climatism, Chapter 8

Dr. Matthew Falagas of the Alfa Institute of Medical Sciences in Athens, Greece, analyzed seasonal mortality for eleven nations, including the United States. The research showed that the average number of deaths per month was lower in summer and fall months and peaked in the coldest months of the year for all nations.

Most of us have an Aunt Susan or an Uncle Henry who has retired or plans to retire to another climate. The favored locations are Alaska, Canada, and North Dakota, right? Nonsense! Senior citizens wish to retire to the warm climates of Florida, Texas, and Arizona. But don't they know our government warns about premature death in warm climates? In fact, Aunt Susan and Uncle Henry have more common sense than the US government.

Steve Goreham is Executive Director of the Climate Science Coalition of America and author of the new book *The Mad, Mad, Mad World of Climatism: Mankind and Climate Change Mania.*