

Climate change made drought 20 times worse this year, and there's no relief in sight



Severe drought limited crops, cut power supplies, and fueled out-of-control blazes throughout the summer in North America, Europe, and Asia. Those disastrous summer drought across the Northern Hemisphere were made 20 times more likely because of human-induced climate change, according to a sweeping new study from an international group of researchers with the World Weather Attribution initiative.

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But what might have seemed outrageous in the past is quickly becoming the norm as the planet heats up. Looking across the Northern Hemisphere, the World Weather Attribution researchers determined that conditions similar to summer 2022's drought can be expected once every 20 years with today's climate.

The researchers measured drought by tracking soil moisture

between June and August. Using real-world observations and climate models, they made comparisons between what unfolded this summer and what would likely have occurred in a world where greenhouse gas emissions haven't heated up the planet. Unsurprisingly, they concluded that this summer's soaring temperatures – already linked to climate change – was the main driver for drought. Earlier this year, the initiative published another report that found that the UK's record-breaking July heatwave would have been “virtually impossible” without climate change.

With the planet running a fever, drought is outliving the summer heat. A peep at the US Drought Monitor Map is a big warning sign going into fall and winter. It shows the Western US ablaze in autumn colors – shades of yellow, orange, and red that denote conditions ranging from “abnormally dry” to “exceptional drought.” With 94 percent of California currently facing severe drought, the state is staring down the barrel of a fourth arid year in a row, its Department of Water Resources warned this week.

California residents are being asked to conserve water, which the state desperately needs for things like keeping the lights on and growing food – no exceptions. Its historic drought has cut into the state's hydropower generation and forced farmers to leave fields idle and unplanted – problems also growing in regions across Europe and Asia that are grappling with drought.

<https://www.theverge.com/2022/10/6/23390929/climate-change-drought-california-20-times-worse-study>