

Geographer says, expect weather severity to increase

April 13 2011, By Bimal Paul and Calin Cooney

(PhysOrg.com) -- Natural disasters like hurricanes, tornadoes and floods occur every year, but are they getting worse?

A Kansas State University expert says not yet -- but they could soon.

Bimal Paul, professor of geography at K-State, researches, among other interests, [natural hazards](#) and human-environment interactions. Although Paul does not believe that [weather](#) severity has significantly increased in recent years, he thinks that may change in the next 20 years.

"I know both the general public and scientists are divided on if there has been an increase in the severity of weather in recent years," Paul said.

"Those who strongly believe that the severity of weather has increased think that [global warming](#) and associated [climate change](#) are the root cause. Although I believe that human activities have intensified global warming, manifestations of such warming are not clearly evident now. But in the long term I think they will be."

That long-term effect is a worldwide concern, Paul said, including in the United States where natural disasters have been minimal in comparison to recent international devastations like the earthquake and tsunami in Japan.

"Climate change due to global warming is projected to worsen the intensity and frequency of weather-related [natural disasters](#), such as floods, droughts, tornadoes and hurricanes," Paul said. "The United

States is likely to face increasingly violent storms as the weather warms. Climate change will cause a rise in sea level, which will have unimaginable impacts on the livelihood and long-term health of a large proportion of the population."

As the effects of climate change spread beyond nature, Paul said that they can devastate populations and even their economies.

"Climate change is likely to adversely impact economy, particularly the agricultural systems," he said. "It will worsen water scarcity, increase risks of diseases and trigger displacement due to recurring floods, storms and [sea level rise](#). People should be prepared for an increase in frequency and severity of extreme natural events in the years to come."

Provided by Kansas State University

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