

Another heat record means 2015 likely to be hottest ever (Update)

December 17 2015



People enjoy the weather at the Assateague Island National Seashore near Berlin, Maryland on November 27, 2015

The globe shattered yet another heat record in November, continuing a warming trend that is all but certain to make 2015 the hottest in modern history, US government scientists said Thursday.

Last month was the warmest November in 136 years and marked seven

months in a row of record-breaking temperatures, said the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) in its monthly climate report.

The November temperature across global land and ocean surfaces was 1.75 degrees Fahrenheit (0.97 degrees Celsius) above the 20th century average.

"This was the highest for November in the 1880-2015 record," said the report.

Nine months this year have broken heat records, including the last seven in a row.

The "first 11 months of 2015 were the warmest such period on record across the world's land and ocean surfaces," it said.

That means 2015 is poised to overtake 2014 as the most scorching year in contemporary times.

"Most of the globe is covered in record warmth," said Jake Crouch, climate scientist at NOAA's National Centers for Environmental Information.

"At this point we're virtually certain that 2015 will be the warmest year on record," he told reporters.

The only way for 2015 not to set new records would be if December were unusually cold—0.43 degrees Fahrenheit (.24 Celsius) colder than the coldest December on record, which came in 1916.

"That's not going to happen," Crouch said.

Warming trend

Scientists say the trend is likely a result of human-driven climate change, whereby the burning of fossil fuels spews greenhouse gases into the atmosphere and traps heat.

Crouch also said the El Nino weather phenomenon, which is particularly strong this season, may be playing a role in the unusually high temperatures.

"We do expect the trend of upward temperatures to continue in the short and medium term," he said.

"The El Nino is marked by a very large area of very warm sea surface temperatures in the equatorial Pacific, which tends to boost global temperatures, so El Nino years tend to be warmer than non El Nino years," he added.

The NOAA report said record warmth was notable across most of equatorial and northeastern South America and parts of southeastern Asia.

Japan was wetter than average last month, and Europe experienced its warmest November since 1910.

Meanwhile, Arctic sea ice was eight percent lower than average, marking the sixth smallest ice cover since satellite records there began in 1979.

Cooler than average temperatures were observed in November in parts of the western United States, southern Greenland, northern Asia, and southern South America.

However, no region of the world experienced record cold in November.

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