

'Hot, wet and wild' 2016 weather as US has warmest June (Update)

July 7 2016, by Seth Borenstein



In this June 20, 2016 file photo, a sign, in direct sunlight, indicates 120 degrees, in Phoenix. Federal meteorologists say America's warm, wild and costly weather broke another record this summer: hottest June. June's average temperature in the Lower 48 states was 71.8 degrees, 3.3 degrees above normal, passing the Dust Bowl record set in 1933. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration climate scientist Jake Crouch says the nation has been quite hot all year with natural variability and long-term warming cause June's heat. (AP Photo/Matt York, File)

America's warm, wild and costly weather broke another record with the hottest June, federal meteorologists say. And if that's not enough, they calculated that 2016 is flirting with the U.S. record for most billion-dollar weather disasters.

The month's average temperature in the Lower 48 states was 71.8 degrees, 3.3 degrees above normal, surpassing the Dust Bowl record set in 1933 by a couple tenths of a degree, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration reported Thursday. Every state in the nation was warmer than normal in June, with Utah and Arizona having their hottest Junes.

"2016 has been hot, wet and wild for the contiguous U.S.," NOAA climate scientist Jake Crouch said Thursday.

The nation had its third hottest first half of the year. June's record heat is from a combination of natural variability and long-term global warming, Crouch said. Records go back to 1895.

But there's been a wet and wild aspect of the year, too. So far, NOAA calculates that there have been eight billion-dollar weather disasters in the first half of this year, not counting the West Virginia flooding, which is still being calculated. They've been a combination of severe storms with tornadoes and heavy rains and downpours that cause damaging flooding. Seven of those have hit Texas.

NOAA calculates billion-dollar disasters, adjusting for inflation, to show trends in the most extreme and damaging weather. Since 1980, the U.S. has averaged five billion-dollar disasters a year, but in the last five years the country has averaged nearly 11 a year. There were eight in 2015. The record is 16 different billion-dollar disasters in 2011.

"The main lesson is that it shows us how vulnerable we are to climate

change," Texas A&M climate scientist Andrew Dessler said in an email. "People frequently think that, 'Oh, we'll just adapt to climate change.' But we're learning that it's going to be a lot harder than people realize to do that. How do you adapt to the amount of rain that West Virginia got?"

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