

Dutch climate scientist Geert Jan van Oldenborgh dies at 59

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Respected Dutch climate scientist Geert Jan van Oldenborgh, co-founder of a group that rapidly analyzes the possible effects of climate change on extreme weather events, has died at age 59, the Royal Netherlands Meteorological Institute said Thursday.

Van Oldenborgh's pioneering work with the World Weather Attribution network led to his recognition last month, along with co-founder Friederike Otto, as one of Time magazine's 100 most influential people of 2021.

The magazine lauded them for building a global team of researchers capable of swiftly analyzing data around [extreme weather](#).

Van Oldenborgh continued his work after being diagnosed eight years ago with Kahler's disease, or multiple myeloma, a type of blood cancer. He died Tuesday, the Dutch meteorological institute said.

Over the summer the team concluded that the devastating heatwave in the American Pacific Northwest was "virtually impossible without human-caused climate change." The attribution network also said that the extreme rainfall which triggered flooding that left a trail of death and destruction through parts of Germany and Belgium in July was "made more likely by [climate change](#)."

Van Oldenborgh, who studied physics at Leiden University, joined the Dutch meteorological institute in 1996, where he studied the

predictability of the Pacific region's El Nino [weather](#) pattern. As part of his work with the Dutch institute, he also contributed to reports by the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

In the early 2000s, he created a platform he called "Climate Explorer" to analyze climate data.

"He did so single-handedly and with little funding; it remains one of the most useful tools for accessing and analyzing climate data available to the world," his colleagues at the World Weather Attribution network said in a statement on the group's website. "His desire to share everything he made, and for science, data and tools to be open, advanced [climate](#) science and meant that results were more easily accessible for the general public."

The group said that Van Oldenborgh's "honesty, kindness and morality shone through his life and work, leaving fellow scientists, students and friends mourning his loss but grateful for having known and worked with him. His legacy will be immense."

Van Oldenborgh is survived by his wife and three sons. The family was planning a private funeral.

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