

Cruel & Unusual

“April is the cruellest month, breeding
Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing
Memory and desire, stirring
Dull roots with spring rain.”
—T.S. Eliot



T.S. Eliot was not referring to weather alone in those lines from his famous poem, “The Waste Land,” but he may as well have been writing about

the erratic spring the nation has experienced this year, with droughts, wildfires, high winds, tornados, floods, hail and even snow seen around the country, and weather conditions and temperatures seesawing from one day to the next.

Appropriately enough, it was during this season of Apocalypse-style weather that two new reports on climate change were released: the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change’s (IPCC) “Climate Change 2014: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability,” in April, and the National Climate Assessment, released by the White House in early May.

It is unlikely that much of what was in the two reports would be news to most people, regardless of one’s thoughts on the issue. The IPCC report lists anticipated impacts of climate change across the world as altered hydrological systems; terrestrial, freshwater and marine species changing their habits; a negative impact on crop yields; extreme weather; and increased violent conflict. The National Climate Assessment—which was supervised and approved by a large committee representing a cross section of American society, including representatives of two oil companies—goes through the country region by region and lists effects such as increased torrential rains in the Northeast, even more serious water scarcity in the

Southeast, and Alaskan glaciers and frozen ground melting into the sea.

These reports are just the latest in a series of dire warnings about climate change’s effects on the planet; the National Climate Assessment is the third national report in 14 years, and the latest edition has a particularly imperative tone. The report’s aim is to instill a sense of urgency among Americans about climate change and thus prepare the nation for the new climate change regulation that President Obama plans to issue in June.

The central goal of the president’s overall plan is ostensibly to reduce carbon dioxide in the atmosphere by mandating reductions in greenhouse gas emissions from burning coal, oil and gas. This will be done through “cost-effective voluntary actions and common-sense standards,” according to a White House fact sheet.

The world is far older than we can truly conceive, and its weather and climates have cycled through many changes over the billions of years. What we do have as of the last few centuries that did not exist in prior ages of the planet is industrialization. It is the responsibility of all industries to make reasonable efforts to preserve clean water and air for all, and not just because of federal regulations. Innovative products and services like those found in this magazine can help to protect jobs as well as the health of the planet and its people, and can help us achieve this “cost-effective, common-sense” way of letting industry move forward without contributing to extreme weather and climate events. **SWS**

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