

## Peter Funt: Chilling news on climate change

PETER FUNT Monterey County Herald

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All I know about climate, some say, is what's outside my window.

Across much of California this is one of the coolest summers in memory, with temperatures well below normal. In San Jose, where the average high in August is 82, so far this month it's at 75.

Yet, on a recent day when San Jose's high was 73 and its low 60, California's Environmental Protection Agency released an extensive report about climate change and global warming. The news was chilling, regardless of what the thermometer happened to say.

The report confirms that climate change throughout the state is resulting in reduced snowmelt runoff, rising sea levels, increasing wildfires and unnatural migration of animals to higher elevations. The report paints what its summary calls "a disturbing picture" of how the state is being affected.

California leads the nation in many areas — both in the size of its problems and in efforts to address them — and it has done more than any other state to limit greenhouse gases and increase the use of renewable energy.

Nationally, progress has been slow. Congress remains entwined financially and emotionally with powerful forces in the oil industry. President Obama has spoken out but come up short, according to many environmentalists.

Polls show most Americans favor a meaningful response to climate change; in California they represent nearly 80 percent of adults. However, there is a lingering fear that some environmental reforms will take away jobs, and the economy remains uppermost in most people's thinking.

But no matter what's outside the window on any given day, the scientific evidence about climate change is overwhelming. In another study released this month, researchers at Stanford University concluded that from 1980 to 2005 the earth's temperature rose at a rate 10 times faster than during any period since the birth of mankind.

Meanwhile, researchers led by a group at UC Berkeley published a lengthy study showing that global warming has behavioral as well as environmental consequences. Increased temperatures prompt more violent crime and even wars. The report projects that in the world's most dangerous regions, such as equatorial Africa, each added degree increases the chance of conflict 11 to 14 percent.

"The world will be a very violent place by mid-century if climate change continues as projected," researcher Thomas Homer-Dixon told the Associated Press.

Yet, for many of us it's still a puzzle. We may read that the water level under San Francisco's Golden Gate Bridge has risen eight inches since 1855, but is that really the type of news that prompts the average citizen to modify his behavior?

Usually a plea from politicians that we "leave a better future for our children and grandchildren" is met with nods of approval followed by a chorus of yawns. Perhaps California can take the lead in changing that when it comes to the very real problems of climate change.

It won't be easy. Not when the thermometer outside has readings in the 60s, and the very day in mid-summer that the state issues its findings on global warming, the San Jose Mercury News carries the front-page headline, "Bundle up: Parkas are in order."

Syndicated columnist Peter Funt lives in Pebble Beach. His new book, "Cautiously Optimistic," is available at [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) and [CandidCamera.com](https://www.CandidCamera.com).