



# Hurricane Sandy Reignites Climate Change Debate

By: Brian Padden - November 01, 2012

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WASHINGTON — The devastation to New York City and the eastern seaboard of the United States from Hurricane Sandy has reignited the debate over global warming. Many experts believe the warming of the planet is largely caused by the burning of fossil fuels.

Hurricane Sandy cut power to about 8 million homes, shut down 70 percent of East Coast oil refineries, and will exceed, economists say, the \$15 billion worth of damage caused last year when Hurricane Irene hit New York.

New York State Governor Andrew Cuomo said his state must adapt to the reality of more frequent extreme weather events.

Carol Werner with the Environmental and Energy Study Institute says climate change scientists have long predicted that intense storms, droughts, and forest fires would result from the rising temperatures and sea levels caused by global warming.

“Scientists have been warning us about this for decades, and unfortunately it is all happening much earlier than what they had originally predicted back in the 80s,” Werner said.

But climate change skeptics take issue with the argument that global warming is to blame for intense storms. Patrick Michaels with the Cato Institute says New York has just been unlucky.

“It was the moon’s fault. This storm hit at full moon which raises the tide there a couple of feet, so the storm set a record. If it had occurred any other time in the lunar cycle, that wouldn’t have happened,” Michaels said.

Climate change believers and skeptics agree that plans for coastal and low-lying areas must adapt to rising sea levels.

But there is still no consensus to mandate the reduction of carbon fuel emissions to mitigate the effects of global warming. Michaels says the private sector will change over time as innovations bring down the costs of clean energy.

“The best policy is not to do very much about it because technologies will change dramatically over the course of a century. Consider what it was like a century ago, you know. What’s nuclear power or what’s this box I have in my pocket that can access all the information in the world?” Michaels said.

Werner says the government needs to lead on the issue.

“Yes, the private sector is critical in terms of investment, but the private sector will also tell you, industry after industry will say we need government leadership. We need certainty in terms of policy. That is the most critical thing to enable us to truly move forward,” Werner said.

She says the lesson of Hurricane Sandy is that the cost of doing nothing is rising.