

Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2024

Remarks Following a Briefing on Extreme Weather

July 2, 2024

The President. Good afternoon.

Now, if my father were here—he's looking down—he'd have—turn and say——

[At this point, the President turned and addressed DC Emergency Operations Center staff members positioned behind him.]

"I apologize for my back." *[Laughter]* It's very impolite to talk with my back to you. But thank you very much. You're doing a hell of a job, all of you.

Look, Mayor, thanks for that introduction and joining me today at the DC Emergency Operations Center.

I also want to thank the first responders that risk their lives every single day running into danger to save others while everyone is running away from danger.

I'm here to talk about how we're preparing and responding to the dangerous impacts of extreme weather and the climate crisis that's affecting people all around America—all around the country. We've got—matter of fact, beyond around America.

You know, summer has just started. Already—already—tens of millions of Americans are under heat warnings from record-shattering temperatures.

Last month here in DC, temperature hit 100 degrees. In Phoenix, Arizona, 112 degrees. In Las Vegas, 111 degrees. Above-normal temperatures also are expected for much of the country in July, especially in central and eastern United States.

Extreme heat—this is a—I think going to surprise a lot of people—not you all—but extreme heat is the number-one weather-related killer in the United States. More people die from extreme heat than floods, hurricanes, and tornadoes combined. Say that again: combined. More people die from heat than those three other major issues.

And look, right now we're also tracking Hurricane Beryl, which is passing the Caribbean. It's the earliest time ever a dangerous category 5 hurricane has been recorded in American history. The people, impacted islands, and communities are in our prayers, and we stand by to provide assistance to them.

Look, extreme weather events drive home a point that I've been saying for so long. Ignoring climate change is deadly and dangerous and irresponsible. These climate-fueled extreme weather events don't just affect people's lives, they also cost money, they hurt the economy, and they have a significant negative psychological effect on people.

Last year, the largest weather-related disasters cost over—get this—\$90 billion in damages in America—\$90 billion in damages. That's the cost so far—last year. They drove nearly 2.5 million people out of their homes, from Hawaii to Vermont.

These events also pose serious threats to our Nation's transportation system, to our power grid, farms, fisheries, and forests—in each case costing lives and costing money.

And the impacts we're seeing are only going to get worse, get more frequent and more ferocious, hitting our most vulnerable people in the most hardest hit communities in the world.

Look, you know, we can change all that. It's within our power. That's why today I'm announcing five new actions my administration is taking to address extreme weather, including heat and other hazards.

The first: The Department of Labor is proposing a new rule that, when finalized, will establish the Nation's first-ever Federal safety standard for excessive heat in the workplace. This includes things like developing response plans to heat illness; training employees and supervisors; implementing rest breaks; access to shade and water—you think we'd have to tell people "access to shade and water," but it—I mean; gradually easing new employees into heat environments.

Across the country, workers suffer heatstroke or even die just doing their jobs. This new rule will substantially reduce heat injuries, illnesses, and deaths for over 36 million workers to whom it will apply, from farmworkers to construction workers, postal workers, manufacturing workers, and so much more.

You know, I want to thank Vice President Harris for the work she has done since she was in the United States Senate that led to this rule.

Second, in the coming days, my Federal Emergency Management will also finalize a rule to improve our Nation's resilience against flooding—resilience.

FEMA will now factor in the effects of future flooding for any federally funded construction project. That is, they're going to look at what caused the damage, what broke down, and what the best way to repair it is, not just bring it back to what it was, but prioritize making it better, prioritize nature-based solutions to reduce the risk of floods.

Look, third, FEMA is announcing——

[The President cleared his throat.]

Excuse me—nearly \$1 billion in grants for over 650 projects across the country that help communities protect against natural disasters, including extreme heat, storms, and flooding.

These grants will also help advance my Justice40 Initiative to deliver at least 40 percent of overall benefits of clean transit, clean energy, and climate investment to devastated communities—to the poor communities that are always left behind.

Fourth, the Environmental Protection Agency is releasing a new report showing the continued impacts of climate change on the health of the American people and on our environment. This report will help us prepare better, respond faster, and save more lives.

And fifth, later this summer, my administration will convene the first-ever White House Summer [Summit; White House correction] on Extreme Heat, bringing together State, local, Tribal, and Territorial leaders and international partners who are protecting communities and workers from extreme weather every single, solitary day.

You know, along with these actions, another reason why we're here today is to get the word out so folks know these resources are available to them and anyone who needs them. You've got—I was telling the group who briefed me earlier, my brother has an expression: "You've got to know how to know." We think everybody understands the government. It's complicated. We want the American people to know help is here, how to get that help.

Follow the guidance from local leaders and public safety officials. Stay indoors somewhere cool if you're vulnerable. Be careful on hot pavement. Know the signs of heatstroke, like headache, nausea, and dizziness. And always have water with you whenever you're outside this summer.

Today's announcements build on historic action my administration has already taken to address extreme heat events. We launched a new website: heat.gov—let me say it again: heat.gov—that shares lifesaving information, and it links a new HeatRisk tool to help communities forecast extreme heat.

Just enter your ZIP Code and see the heat forecast not only generically—generally, but in your community, where you're living, and we'll get back to you exactly what the heat forecast for your neighborhood is.

My Department of Labor also created the first-ever national program to protect workers from heat stress. We've invested billions to enhance our power grid, expand energy storages [storages; White House correction] so that lights, air conditioning, refrigeration, internet stay on during heat waves, storms, and other climate changes. It's building back a different way.

All told, we've invested a record more than \$50 billion for climate resilience, including against extreme heat and wildfires.

But that's not all. The American—my American Rescue Plan is helping States and cities promote energy efficiency, reduce the impacts from flooding, and open cooling centers. People have to know where to go—where they can go in their neighborhood. They don't—this is just not automatic.

Through the bipartisan infrastructure law, we're delivering over \$20 billion to lower your energy costs, upgrading the electric grid to withstand stronger heat waves and storms.

And my Inflation Reduction Act, the most significant climate investment ever in the history of the world anywhere in the world, has already created 300,000 new jobs, building clean energy we need to cut our emissions and to lead the world.

Unfortunately, my predecessor and the MAGA Republicans in Congress are trying to undo all this progress. They still deny climate change even exists. They deny climate change even exists—they must be living in a hole somewhere—[laughter]—at the expense of health and safety of their own constituents. They deny it exists.

Every single congressional Republican voted against the investments which created these jobs and combat climate change. Many of them are trying to repeal those climate provisions and kill those jobs. I, quite frankly, think it's not only outrageous, it's really stupid.

Everyone who willfully denies the impacts of climate change is condemning the American people to a dangerous future and either is really, really dumb or has some other motive—[inaudible]. How can you deny there's climate change, for God's sake?

Let me close with this. When disaster strikes, there are no red States or blue States. I've demonstrated that. I said, "No matter whether you vote for me or not, everyone is going to get treated fairly." They're just communities—not red communities, blue communities. They're just communities, families looking for help. And my administration is going to be there for you every step of the way.

We just have to remember who we are, for God's sake. We're the United States of America—the United States of America. There is nothing—nothing—nothing beyond our capacity if we work together.

So God bless you all. We're just getting started here, man. I'm confident we're going to get this done.

Now I want to turn it over to Clint Osborn, director of the—acting director of DC Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency, to tell you what his team's incredible work is doing on the front lines for extreme weather events.

Where are you, pal?

District of Columbia Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency Acting Director Clint Osborn. Right here, sir.

The President. Right behind me.

Acting Director Osborn. Well done.

The President. By the way, this guy does everything. *[Laughter]* I get in the elevator, he's operating the elevator. *[Laughter]* I tell you, that's what they call full service, man.

Acting Director Osborn. Full-service, white-glove emergency management. *[Laughter]*

The President. Thank you, man.

Acting Director Osborn. Yes, sir.

[Acting Director Osborn made remarks; no transcript was provided.]

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:16 p.m. at the DC Emergency Operations Center. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor Muriel E. Bowser of Washington, DC; and former President Donald J. Trump. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on July 3.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Extreme weather briefing.

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