Hitting close to home
Global warming is fueling extreme weather across the U.S.

Every year, weather-related disasters injure or kill hundreds of Americans and cause billions of dollars in damage. Many of the risks posed by extreme weather will likely increase in a warming world. Scientists have already noted increases in extreme precipitation and heat waves as global warming raises temperatures and exacerbates weather extremes.

Weather-related disasters affect millions in Massachusetts

- Every Massachusetts citizen lives in a county that was affected by at least one federally-declared weather disaster since 2010.
- Massachusetts experienced 7 weather-related disasters including severe storms, tornadoes, floods, tropical storms, and snow and ice storms since September 2010.

New online map shows personal stories of extreme weather

Environment Massachusetts’ new interactive extreme weather map shows weather-related disasters in the United States over the last five years and tells the stories of the people and communities who have endured some of those disasters.

Map visitors can focus in on specific types of weather and even add their own stories of how extreme weather has affected their lives.
Massachusetts must cut global warming pollution

To protect our children and our communities from a future of worsening extreme weather, Massachusetts, its cities, and the nation should limit global warming pollution to levels consistent with the Paris Climate Agreement. The state has set a target of 35 to 45 percent below 1990 emissions by 2030 and 80 percent by mid-century. Continued leadership from Massachusetts is essential. Key steps include:

• Strengthen the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative. Massachusetts should reduce regional power plant pollution by more than half in the next 15 years, capping emissions at less than 40 million tons per year by 2030.

• Maximize energy efficiency. Massachusetts is an efficiency leader, but it can do more. For example, cities should adopt net-zero energy building codes and retrofit standards.

• Shift to 100 percent clean power. Meeting our climate goals will require accelerating deployment of clean, renewable energy sources such as solar and offshore wind power. The state should set ambitious goals for adoption of renewable energy—including 20 percent solar by 2025—and lower the barriers that currently stand in the way of clean energy.

• Use clean energy for transportation and heating. Massachusetts should shift energy for transportation and heating away from fossil fuels and toward electricity or other forms of clean energy.

• Keep dirty fuels in the ground. To protect the global climate and our health, the nation must cease construction of any new fossil fuel infrastructure and leave our coal, oil and gas reserves in the ground.

Extreme weather causes widespread destruction

• In February 2015 a large winter storm and associated cold wave impacted many central, eastern and northeastern states, including Massachusetts. The total, direct losses in Massachusetts alone exceeded $1 billion and the storm caused at least 30 deaths in the affected region.

• In October 2012 Hurricane Sandy caused extensive damage across several northeastern states, including Massachusetts, due to high wind and coastal storm surge. Sandy’s impact on major population centers caused widespread interruption to critical water and electrical services. Sandy caused at least 159 deaths and was estimated to cost $67.6 billion.

• Since 2010 extreme weather events in Massachusetts caused at least 9 power outages, including one that lasted 10 days in 2011.

Weather extremes are becoming more common

Globally, 2015 was Earth’s hottest year on record, surpassing 2014. Many types of extreme weather are expected to become more frequent or severe in a warming world, which could lead to more weather-related disasters.

• Tropical Storms and Hurricanes: Global warming has the potential to make tropical storms more destructive. Hurricanes and other coastal storms are likely to be more powerful and rainier, while storm surges could be more destructive as sea levels rise.

• Heavy Rain and Snow: Extreme precipitation is already increasing; continued trends could increase the risk of intense downpours, heavy snowstorms and severe flooding.

• Droughts and Wildfires: While global warming is anticipated to bring more rain to some areas, it will also likely elevate temperatures and extend dry spells. The potential for stronger drought—and greater area burned by wildfires—will increase.—

For full methodology, citations, and the online map, please visit: www.EnvironmentMassachusetts.org/ExtremeWeather

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