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Katie Couric's Weather Report: All Wet (When It Comes to Climate Change)

By Wayne Barrett, Wednesday, May. 5 2010 @ 3:33PM [Comments \(1\)](#)

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On Monday night, Katie Couric swung from CBS's coverage of the oil spill to the Tennessee floods by saying she was moving "from a man-made disaster to a natural one." That's one big and unproven assumption. How does Couric know that the worst Tennessee flooding in history has nothing to do with man-induced climate change?



Couric was just succumbing to the presumption of virtually all weather reporting in America, which has never adapted to the overwhelming scientific consensus about warming and the extreme weather events that go with it, starting with every form of aggravated precipitation.

Climatologists always caution that it is not possible to point to a single current event and say climate change caused it. But the unprecedented floods in Tennessee are one of the specific disasters foreseen in climate change studies of the state done in 2008.

The University of Maryland's Center for Integrative Environmental Research published a study called [Economic Impacts of Climate Change on Tennessee](#) a year and a half ago. It concluded that "precipitation is likely to increase for Tennessee on an annual average basis and so are extreme events such as heat waves, droughts and floods."

Floods, the study found, "will become more prominent as warmer temperatures dry out the soil, making it less permeable, and as rainfall, which is predicted to increase by 7 percent in the state, comes in the form of extreme weather events."

The study even found that flooding "is most likely to occur in the center of the state, where an array of rivers and streams has carved out the Tennessee Valley," precisely where much of the flooding occurred. The study referred to "infrequent yet intense storm events," as well as tornadoes, which have also recently hit Tennessee and "are influenced in part by

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dry air." Tornadoes, it said, "could become more common in the state."

It's not clear that this catastrophe is a consequence of these predicted trends, but neither is it clear that it is not. Yet Couric and the rest of the weather coverage are predicated on the naked assumption that it isn't. The cable news networks now have a new slug called "Extreme Weather," and the shows drop cameras down in one region after another depicting one disaster after another, but always without any context. Or even any attempt to explain why we might be seeing so many new examples of unprecedented "natural" disasters.

The only coverage that has referred to cause has cited a March assessment by the National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), which [anticipated that the region might be hit with flooding](#), attributing it to an "unusually wet winter and heavy rains last fall," both of which could be climate-change related. The NOAA report also referred to a possible El Niño effect.

One powerful reason why America is so reluctant to take the kind of action necessary to ward off or mitigate the effects of climate change is that our weathermen and women never consider it when they're reporting events that may be tied to it. Were realistic and balanced explorations of possible causes aired as often as the weather events themselves are covered, a constituency for carbon reduction and adaptation would develop. It would even occur "naturally."

Research assistance by Sara Gates and Scott Greenberg

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Peter Mizla says:

I totally agree

The anti climate change massive PR offensive has been very effective. The floods in Nashville and New England this spring where historic- the Spring in New England may become the warmest on record.

No one or group of events can point these weather patterns to climate change-but the accumulative events may.

The climate scientists say that increase water vapor caused by warming will increase precipitation. My case is closed.



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Posted On: Thursday, May. 6 2010 @ 8:28AM

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