

Hotter, drier and wetter is America's new normal

By **SETH BORENSTEIN**
Associated Press

America's new normal temperature is a degree hotter than it was just two decades ago.

Scientists have long talked about climate change — hotter temperatures, changes in rain and snowfall and more extreme weather — being the “new normal.” Data released Tuesday by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration put hard figures on the cliché.

The new United States normal is not just hotter, but wetter in the eastern and central parts of the nation and considerably drier in the West than just a decade earlier.

Meteorologists calculate climate normals based on 30 years of data to limit the random swings of daily weather. It's a standard set by the World Meteorological Organization. Every 10 years, NOAA updates normal for the country as a whole, states and cities — by year, month and season.

For the entire nation, the yearly normal temperature is now 53.3 degrees based on weather station data from 1991 to 2020, nearly half a degree warmer than a decade ago. Twenty years ago, normal was 52.3 degrees based on data from 1971 to 2000. The average U.S. temperature for



A helicopter drops water while battling a fire in California in August.

Noah Berger/AP Photo

the 20th century was 52 degrees.

The new normal annual U.S. temperature is 1.7 degrees hotter than the first normal calculated for 1901 to 1930.

“Almost every place in the U.S. has warmed from the 1981 to 2010 normal to the 1991 to 2020 normal,” said Michael Palecki, NOAA's normals project

manager.

Fargo, North Dakota, where the new normal is a tenth of a degree cooler than the old one, is an exception, but more than 90% of the U.S. has warmer normal temperatures now than 10 years ago, Palecki said.

In Chicago and Asheville, North Carolina, the new yearly normal temperature jumped 1.5 degrees in

a decade. Seattle, Atlanta, Boston and Phoenix had their normal annual temperature rise by at least half a degree in the last decade.

Charlottesville, Virginia, saw the biggest jump in normal temperatures among 739 major weather stations. Other large changes were in California, Texas, Virginia, Indiana, Arizona, Oregon, Arkansas, Maryland, Flor-

ida, North Carolina and Alaska.

New normals are warmer because the burning of fossil fuels is making the last decade “a much hotter time period for much of the globe than the decades” before, said Cornell University climate scientist Natalie Mahowald.

For Phoenix, the biggest change in normal came in

precipitation. The normal annual rainfall for Phoenix dropped 10% down to 7.2 inches. Rainfall in Los Angeles dropped 4.6%.

At the same time, Asheville saw a nearly 9% increase in rainfall, while New York City's rainfall rose 6%. Seattle's normal is 5% wetter than it used to be.

Climate scientists are split about how useful or misleading newly calculated normals are.

Mahowald and University of Oklahoma meteorology professor Jason Furtado said updating normal calculations helps city and regional planners to prepare for flooding and drought, farmers to decide what and when to plant, energy companies to meet changing demands and doctors to tackle public health issues arising from climate change.

But Pennsylvania State University climate scientist Michael Mann said he prefers a constant baseline such as 1951 to 1980, which is what NASA uses. Adjusting normal every 10 years “perverts the meaning of ‘normal’ and ‘normalizes’ away climate change,” he said in an email.

North Carolina's state climatologist Kathie Dello said, “It seems odd to still call them normals because 1991-2020 was anything but normal climate-wise.”

Gun restriction legislation moves to Gov. Brown's desk

By **PETER WONG**
Oregon Capital Bureau

SALEM — Gov. Kate Brown is the final stop for the Oregon Legislature's major gun legislation this year.

The state Senate voted Wednesday to accept the House version of a bill that combines requirements for locks and safe storage of firearms with a narrowed ban on concealed-handgun license holders bringing guns into some public places, notably the Capitol and Portland International Airport.

The vote was 17-7. State Sen. Betsy Johnson, of Scappoose, was the lone Democrat to join six Republicans in opposition to Senate Bill 554. Five Republicans and one independent were recorded as excused or absent.

Sen. Floyd Prozanski, a Democrat from Eugene and chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, said the bill follows the principles laid out by a 2008 U.S. Supreme Court decision. The court for the first time concluded there was an individual right to bear arms under the Second Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, but that right can be regulated.

“What we do know is that reasonable regulations can be placed on these individual rights we have,” Prozanski said. “The bottom line is that



Associated Press

Oregon lawmakers have approved tougher restrictions on gun storage.

we have a bill that does in fact address certain areas that we feel as a state need to be regulated.”

Oregon would join 11 other states with some form of requirements for locks and safe storage of firearms, according to the Kaiser Family Foundation.

As for the narrower scope of the ban on guns in some public places, Prozanski said it was a compromise. The original Senate version would have left it to all local governments to decide restrictions for themselves. The final version limits the option to school districts, community colleges and state universities. The option for cities, counties and special districts was removed.

The ban still applies to the Capitol in Salem and the passenger terminal at the Portland airport.

State of Safety Action, a nonprofit that advocates prevention of gun violence, issued a statement of support after the vote.

“Safe storage saves lives, helping prevent unintentional shootings and firearm suicides,” Henry Wessinger, the group's president, said. “It will make it harder for potential school shooters to obtain a gun, and it will support responsible gun ownership.”

Senate Republican Leader Fred Girod, of Lyons, took issue not only with the restrictions but also the process that allowed the House to merge its safe-storage bill with the original Senate version, which dealt with firearms in public places.

“This is an example of how bad this building can get,” he said. “We were locked out of the process in this bill.”

But, like his counterpart in the House, Republican Leader Christine Drazan, of Canby, Girod also took issue with the way some gun rights advocates lobbied in opposition to it. The Senate's March 25 vote on the original version prompted threats against some Republican senators and a recall effort aimed at Girod, because they did not walk out to call a halt to Senate business.

“There is a fringe group out there that is sure not welcome in my office,” Girod said. “It is not OK to threaten people's lives, their staff. It's not an appropriate way to lobby.”

Under the bill, guns must

have trigger or cable locks, be stored in a locked container or in a gun room. An offense is a Class C violation, which carries a maximum fine of \$500, unless someone under age 18 obtains access, in which case it is a Class A violation with a maximum fine of \$2,000. No jail time is

imposed for violations.

Stolen firearms must be reported to police, generally within 72 hours. The Capitol and the Portland airport passenger terminal would be off-limits to all firearms, including those borne by holders of concealed-handgun licenses, except for law

enforcement.

Violations are considered Class A misdemeanors with maximum punishments of one year in jail and a fine of \$6,250.

The Oregon Capital Bureau is a collaboration between EO Media Group and Pamplin Media Group.

NATIONAL NURSES WEEK, MAY 6-12 Everyday Superheroes



**COLUMBIA
MEMORIAL
HOSPITAL**

2111 Exchange St., Astoria, Oregon
www.columbiamemorial.org

2021

GRADUATION

To honor and congratulate the Class of 2021

The Astorian is creating a graduation publication for our local high schools that will publish on **Tuesday, June 1st**. This full-color publication will include biographies and pictures of each valedictorian and salutatorian, name and photo of each 2019 graduate and special congratulatory ads from local businesses, family and friends.

To participate in this publication, contact your sales representative today
503-325-3211
DEADLINE: THURSDAY, MAY 13

Graduating high schools:

JEWELL
Saturday, June 12

WARRENTON
Friday, June 11

ASTORIA
Saturday, June 5

KNAPPA
Saturday, June 12

SEASIDE
Thursday, June 10