

EAST OREGONIAN

Founded October 16, 1875

KATHRYN B. BROWN

Publisher

DANIEL WATTENBURGER

Managing Editor

TIM TRAINOR

Opinion Page Editor

MARISSA WILLIAMS

Regional Advertising Director

MARCY ROSENBERG

Circulation Manager

JANNA HEIMGARTNER

Business Office Manager

MIKE JENSEN

Production Manager

A man carries children after being rescued by members of the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries and the the Houston Fire Department after residents were stranded by floodwaters due to Hurricane Harvey.

Rising to the emergency

We occasionally remind our readers to be prepared for emergency situations, come what may.

In Oregon, we’re often thinking of Cascadia — an off-coast earthquake and resultant tsunami. Or perhaps we imagine another devastating Pacific Northwest volcanic eruption. Or maybe it’s a dam breach, or an extended drought, or a wildfire roaring down your rural canyon.

Our advice is relatively the same: have an emergency plan, proactively set aside some food and water, batteries and a flashlight, make sure your children and parents know what to do if the emergency happens during school, in the middle of the night, during summer or winter.

But human nature being what it is, we convince ourselves that will never happen to us. That it will never happen here. That it will never happen in our lifetime.

Perhaps the people of Houston and coastal Texas and Louisiana felt the same way, but their lives and communities will be forever changed by Hurricane Harvey and its continued effects.

People have died, homes have been lost, possessions destroyed, infrastructure washed away. And there is no end in sight — six straight days of rain have brought more precipitation to Houston in a week than Seattle sees all year. And the rain keeps falling, and the rivers and reservoirs keep rising.

So perhaps with this news jumping off the page, or screaming into your ears and eyes from radio and television, it’s a good time to get across the importance of emergency planning. Being prepared may save your life, and the lives of your family and loved ones.

Harvey also offers a reminder of what we do in times of emergency. If we are lucky enough to be spared, we help those in need.

There are ways to donate money, food, time — and even your blood — to those who need help. Please, consider it, knowing sometimes it could be you on the other end of the disaster.

You can donate to the Hurricane Harvey Relief Fund, which is administered by the Greater Houston Community Foundation. Or you could donate to the Houston Food Bank.

The Texas Diaper Bank in San Antonio is asking for diapers and wipes, which can be mailed to 5415 Bandera Road, Suite 504, San Antonio, TX., 78238.

The United Way of Greater Houston flood relief fund will be used to help with immediate needs as well as long-term services like minor home repair. Visit their website to donate or text UWFLOOD to 41444.

You can also donate to national organizations that are working in the affected area. The American Red Cross is accepting donations on its website, or you can text HARVEY to 90999 to donate \$10. Catholic Charities provides food, clothing, shelter and support services to those from all religious backgrounds. You can donate to the Salvation Army by calling 1-800-SAL-ARMY (1-800-725-2769) or texting STORM to 51555.

AABB, which coordinates a task force to manage blood collection efforts during disasters, put out a call on Sunday for blood donations in the aftermath of Harvey. Most in demand: those with type O-positive blood. Contact your local blood center to set up an appointment.

Unsigned editorials are the opinion of the East Oregonian editorial board of publisher Kathryn Brown, managing editor Daniel Wattenburger, and opinion page editor Tim Trainor. Other columns, letters and cartoons on this page express the opinions of the authors and not necessarily that of the East Oregonian.

OTHER VIEWS

Harvey, the storm that humans helped cause

Even before the devastation from Harvey, southeastern Texas was enduring a year unlike any before.

The daily surface temperature of the Gulf of Mexico last winter never dropped below 73 degrees. You can probably guess how many previous times that had happened: Zero.

This sort of heat has a specific effect on storms: Warmer weather causes heavier rainfall. Why? When the seas warm, more moisture evaporates into the air, and when the air warms — which has also been happening in Texas — it can carry more moisture.

The severity of Harvey, in other words, is almost certainly related to climate change.

Yes, I know the sober warning that’s issued whenever an extreme weather disaster occurs: No individual storm can be definitively blamed on climate change. It’s true, too. Some version of Harvey probably would have happened without climate change, and we’ll never know the hypothetical truth.

But it’s time to shed some of the fussy over-precision about the relationship between climate change and weather. James Hansen, the eminent climate researcher, has used the term “scientific reticence” to describe this problem. Out of an abundance of academic caution — a caution that is in many ways admirable — scientists (and journalists) have obscured climate change’s true effects.

We don’t display the same fussiness in other important areas. No individual case of lung cancer can be definitively linked to smoking, as Heidi Cullen, the chief scientist at Climate Central, notes. Few vehicle accidents can be definitely linked to alcohol, and few saved lives can be definitively linked to seat belts.

Yet smoking, drunken driving and seat-beltless riding each created a public health crisis. Once the link became clear and widely understood, people changed their behavior and prevented a whole lot of suffering.

Climate change is on its way to becoming a far worse public health crisis than any of those other problems. Already, it has aggravated droughts, famines and deadly heat waves. In the United States, global warming seems to be contributing to the spread of Lyme disease.

Now we have Harvey. It has brought yet another flood that’s being described as unprecedented. It is terrorizing thousands of Texans and submerged large parts of the nation’s fourth-largest city, Houston.

The immediate priorities, of course, are protection and rescue, and many Texans are rising to the moment. Houston has a certain friendly swagger, a mix of old Texas and new,

DAVID LEONHARDT
Comment

and it’s evident this week. Residents are checking up on neighbors and saving people they’d never met before. The stories are inspiring.

They’re inspiring because they involve people coming together to protect one another. And how can people come together to protect one another from future storms and floods? The answer starts with getting real about climate change, which is the main reason storms are doing more damage than in the past.

Obviously, some extreme weather events are unrelated to climate change. But a growing number appear to be related, including many involving torrential rain, thanks to the warmer seas and air.

“The heaviest rainfall events have become heavier and more frequent, and the amount of rain falling on the heaviest rain days has also increased,” as the National Climate Assessment, a federal report, found. “The mechanism driving these changes,” the report explained, is hotter air stemming from “human-caused warming.”

Heavier rain can then interact with higher sea levels to increase flooding, as seems to have happened with Harvey. In Houston’s particular case, a lack of zoning laws has led to an explosion of building, which further worsens flooding. The city added 24 percent more pavement between 1996 and 2011, according to Samuel Brody of Texas A&M, and Houston wasn’t exactly light on pavement in 1996. Pavement, unlike soil, fails to absorb water.

Add up the evidence, and it overwhelmingly suggests that human activity has helped create the ferocity of Harvey. That message may be hard to hear — harder to hear, certainly, than stories of human kindness that is now mitigating the storm’s toll. But it’s the truth.

Beyond Harvey, the potential damage from climate change is terrifying. Disease, famine and flooding of biblical proportions are within the realm of possibility. Unfortunately, stories of potential misery have not been enough to stir this country to action. They haven’t led to a Manhattan Project for alternative energy or a national effort to reduce carbon emissions.

So when we are faced with actual misery that stems in part from climate change, we should be honest about it.

What’s happening in Texas is heartbreaking, and yet it will be a more frequent part of modern life unless we do something about it. That, ultimately, is the most compassionate message about Harvey.

David Leonhardt is an op-ed columnist for The New York Times.

LETTERS POLICY

The East Oregonian welcomes original letters of 400 words or less on public issues and public policies for publication in the newspaper and on our website. The newspaper reserves the right to withhold letters that address concerns about individual services and products or letters that infringe on the rights of private citizens. Submitted letters must be signed by the author and include the city of residence and a phone number. Send letters to 211 S.E. Byers Ave. Pendleton, OR 97801 or email editor@eastoregonian.com.

OTHER VIEWS

Forest collaboratives include wide range of constructive voices

The Blue Mountains Forest Partners is a nonprofit organization that consists of loggers, ranchers, contractors, conservationists, landowners and others from Grant County and across eastern Oregon who care about public lands and rural communities.

We’ve been working together since 2006 to create and implement a shared vision to improve the wellbeing of forests

We insist that voting membership be tied to respectful, courteous, informed participation.

and communities in the Blue Mountains on the Malheur National Forest. We have worked with the United States Forest Service to keep the last remaining timber mill (Malheur Lumber Company) in Grant and Harney counties operating, increase the Forest Service’s capacity to restore large landscapes with the addition of more than \$4 million in new federal dollars from the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program, and increased

the timber harvest to 75 million board feet — more volume than in recent decades.

These successes have not come without hard work and controversy. However, Blue Mountains Forest Partners believes that by working collaboratively to achieve socioeconomic and ecological outcomes, our federal lands and the communities that depend on them will be better off in the long run.

Because passions can run high when discussing forest management, the partners insist that all of our voting members adhere to a basic code of conduct for civil dialogue. In today’s heated political environment, we take this requirement seriously. We ask that voting members:

refrain from personal attacks and counterproductive “backroom deals;” respect each other in and outside of meetings; and treat disagreements as “problems to be solved” rather than “battles to be won,” among other commonsense conditions.

Individuals who demonstrate their ability to meet these expectations are welcomed as voting members; those who unable or unwilling to adhere to our civil discourse standards may still express their perspectives as nonvoting participants. In this way, the Partners listen to all voices that have a stake in the management of the Malheur National Forest, even when those voices substantively disagree.

Mr. George is right that Eastern Oregon collaborative groups should welcome all input into federal forest management (*Forest collaboratives need to welcome all input, EO, August 25*). But the Partners are also right to insist that voting membership must be tied to respectful, courteous, and informed collaborative participation.

Glen Johnston is president of the Blue Mountains Forest Partners, and owns and operates Backlund Logging in John Day. Susan Jane Brown is vice president of the Blue Mountains Forest Partners, and wildlands program director and staff attorney for the Western Environmental Law Center in John Day and Portland.