



Hurricane Sandy: Messaging the Storm

Hurricane Sandy is expected to be an [“unprecedented”](#) storm, pummeling the East Coast of the United States early next week and showcasing the amplification effect of climate change. As of Friday, the storm is forecast to inflict significant, widespread damage. The path and size of the storm may still change, so climate communicators should wait to see how the storm develops, but be prepared.

When talking about the connections between Sandy (or any storm) and climate change, communicators should take care to make accurate statements about these connections. Here are some tips for talking about this potentially historic storm:

- **Paint the big picture first.**

Climate change is changing the weather. The past few years have been marked by [unusually severe extreme weather](#) characteristic of climate change.

- **Say what we know about the connections between storms and climate change.**

[Global warming puts more energy into storms.](#)

[Climate change loads storms, including hurricanes, with extra rainfall](#), making flooding more likely.

[Storm surge now rides on sea levels that have risen over the last century due to global warming](#), amplifying flooding losses where the surge strikes.

Don't start with what we *don't* know, such a "it's impossible to tie a single event to climate change..." If pressed, you can say "each storm is another piece of evidence scientists look at."

- **Explain how Sandy is part of the larger trend.**

Right now, sea surface temperatures along the Northeast U.S. coast are about [5°F above average](#), which is likely to help keep the storm powered up and load moisture into the storm, fueling heavy rain. September had the [second highest global ocean temperatures on record](#).

In the Northeast United States, sea levels are rising up to [four times faster than the global average](#), making this area more vulnerable to storm surge and flooding.

Multiple high tides may help drive flooding fueled by a triple climate whammy: [storm surge from a storm kept alive due to elevated sea surface temperatures](#); sea level rise driven by global warming; and extra heavy rains due to the extra rainfall loaded into the storm by climate change.

- **Reiterate how climate change has stacked the deck, making this kind of event more likely to occur, and will only get worse unless we curb industrial pollution.**
- **Explain that we can address the threat of climate change, and provide a concrete action to start.**

Provide a climate change or preparedness action that your organization supports that your members/readers can take.

For more information, please visit Climate Nexus' reports [Connecting the Dots](#) and [Climate Signals](#).