



Written by [C. Mitchell Shaw](#) on October 9, 2017

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Howlingly Wrong About Hurricane History

Correction Please! Howlingly Wrong About Hurricane History

A sampling of news articles:

Item: *While reporting on Hurricane Harvey on August 28, the New York Times politicized the death and destruction caused by the storm. In an opinion piece entitled “Hurricane Harvey Was No Surprise,” the Times wrote that President Trump “shouldn’t have been surprised” by the severity of the storm since “climate science has repeatedly shown that global warming is increasing the odds of extreme precipitation and storm surge flooding.” In an appeal to blind faith in climate-alarmist scientists, the article claims, “There is now so much evidence of increasing extremes that anyone who understands the science — or trusts the scientists in their government doing the research — should expect that records will continue to be broken.”*

Item: *Two weeks later, as residents of Florida were dealing with Hurricane Irma, the Times was at it again — this time in an article that pretended not to be an opinion piece. That article — entitled “Hurricane Irma Linked to Climate Change? For Some, a Very ‘Insensitive’ Question” and dated September 11 — took EPA boss Scott Pruitt to task for calling the media out for politicizing Harvey and Irma, saying, “For scientists, drawing links between warming global temperatures and the ferocity of hurricanes is about as controversial as talking about geology after an earthquake. But in Washington, where science is increasingly political, the fact that oceans and atmosphere are warming and that the heat is propelling storms into superstorms has become as sensitive as talking about gun control in the wake of a mass shooting.”*

Correction: *While the New York Times claims that “Hurricane Harvey Was No Surprise” because the country should expect increasingly destructive hurricanes, owing to global warming, what should really come as no surprise is that the Times made such a claim because it typically subordinates facts and research to its political agenda.*

The truth is that Hurricanes Irma and Harvey were nothing out of the ordinary — historically.

The reality that hurricanes leave a wide trail of death and destruction in their wake is nothing new, but while Harvey and Irma were — in some regards — exceptionally severe storms, it is not as if they were





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in a class by themselves. In Harvey's case, though it made landfall as a Category 4 storm, it only caused a storm surge of just over six feet at its highest point, and its power quickly faded. The main reason it caused devastation is because its movement stalled, and it continued to dump rain on the same areas for days. (And it's not likely any scientists will claim that stalled storm systems are caused by global warming.) Irma also fell off in ferocity quickly. Though those hurricanes were admittedly costly, a look at probably the 10 worst hurricanes in U.S. history shows that Harvey and Irma are not proof that the storm game is changing.

The following list is this writer's best attempt to order the destructiveness of those 10 hurricanes, measuring both death tolls and destruction. All financial estimates are adjusted for the 2016 value of the dollar.

- *Galveston Hurricane (1900)* — This Category 4 storm is indisputably the deadliest and second-costliest to ever hit the United States. Between 6,000 and 12,000 people lost their lives and Galveston, Texas, was practically destroyed by wind, rain, and storm surge, with damage estimates at \$124 billion.
- *Okeechobee Hurricane (1928)* — As a result of this Category 4 storm, which made landfall in Palm Beach County, Florida, with a storm surge that caused waters to overrun dikes around the south shore of Lake Okeechobee, between 2,500 and 3,000 people lost their lives and \$41.8 billion in damage was done.

Photo: AP Images

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- *Hurricane Katrina (2005)* — While not the deadliest storm, Katrina, a Category 3 storm, was the costliest storm to ever hit the United States, with an estimated price tag of \$134.8 billion. Most of New Orleans was flooded as levees broke under the torrential rain and storm surge. One thousand two hundred people lost their lives, and many others were left homeless.
- *Cheniere Caminada Hurricane (1893)* — When this Category 4 storm struck off the coast of Louisiana, it took the lives of nearly 2,000 people, who were either on a nearby island or in boats. Most of the deaths were the result of severe storm surge. The storm also damaged rice crops in the Gulf States, causing long-term financial consequences.
- *Sea Islands Hurricane (1893)* — This Category 3 storm caused as many as 2,000 deaths in Georgia and South Carolina, and had a storm surge calculated at 30 feet high, which was the major contributor to the death and destruction caused by the storm.
- *Georgia-South Carolina Hurricane (1881)* — While only a Category 2 storm, this hurricane still makes the list of the worst U.S. hurricanes since it caused the deaths of an estimated 700 people and caused widespread destruction, including tearing roofs and chimneys from buildings.
- *Atlantic-Gulf Hurricane, also known as "Florida Keys Hurricane" (1919)* — While known mostly for the damage and deaths caused in South Florida, this Category 4 storm also wreaked havoc on South Texas. Most of the damage was the result of a 16-foot storm surge. Communication was cut off for all of Florida south of Miami. Ships were sunk. Official reports are that as many as 900 people lost their lives in the storm. Damages are estimated at more than \$310 million.
- *The Great New England Hurricane (1938)* — This Category 3 hurricane made landfall between Long Island and Connecticut with winds up to 186 mph. It remains not only the most powerful hurricane in



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New England history, but also the deadliest. Before it was over, more than 57,000 homes were destroyed, and as many as 900 lives were lost. The damages are estimated at \$4.7 billion.

- *Hurricane Audrey (1957)* — When Audrey made landfall along the Texas-Louisiana border as a Category 4 storm, the damage at the time was unprecedented. Audrey was also deadly, claiming the lives of more than 400 people. While much of the death and destruction was caused by storm surge, two major tornadoes that sprang from Audrey added to the death toll and the damage.

- *Florida Keys Labor Day Hurricane (1935)* — This hurricane, a Category 5 storm, was (at the time) the most intense hurricane to have ever been recorded making landfall in the United States. The damage was catastrophic. A 20-foot storm surge and 185 mph winds destroyed nearly every structure on some of the Keys. By the time the storm moved inland to Georgia and the Carolinas and finally lost most of its strength, it had claimed more than 400 lives.

There are at least three interesting points coming out of that list. First, out of the 10 worst hurricanes to ever hit the United States, only one was a Category 5, which happened in 1935. And though hurricane strength is categorized by wind speed, that is not the usual culprit in death and destruction. Second, of the 10 most deadly, costly, and destructive storms, only two hit the United States after 1953 (the year the United States began naming hurricanes). Third, two of the worst storms to have ever hit the United States were in 1893 — well before anyone could stretch either logic or the truth far enough to keep a straight face while claiming that the severity of those storms was the result of man-made “climate change.”

In fact, the 1893 hurricane season — before the end of the industrial revolution — was one of the worst ever, with 12 tropical storms forming and 10 becoming hurricanes, three of which were deadly. The 1893 season is only one of two on record (along with the 1998 season) when four Atlantic hurricanes were active on the same day. □ Finally, the liberal media alarmists don’t acknowledge the fact that — while they claim that man-made “climate change” is responsible for the severity *and frequency* of hurricanes — the last major hurricane to hit the United States before this season was Wilma in 2005.

The shameful tendency of the *Times* and other liberal media outlets to capitalize on the misery of those suffering the effects of a natural disaster is a clear indicator of a lack of human decency, and its propagandizing is a clear indicator of a lack of journalistic integrity.

The *New York Times* doubled-down on its lack of integrity in its reporting on EPA boss Scott Pruitt. After the *Times* and other liberal news outlets began politicizing the hurricanes, Pruitt — in what should have been seen as a move to restore balance to a debate that has for far too long been one-sided — told CNN that now is not the time to talk about climate change, saying, “To have any kind of focus on the cause and effect of the storm; versus helping people, or actually facing the effect of the storm, is misplaced.” The liberal media — hellbent on using these tragedies to push their liberal agenda of “climate change” — then used Pruitt’s reasonable statement to launch a whole new wave of headlines about the “fact” that the storms are the result of global warming.

As in most fake news, there are two elements to the way the liberal media report on this: They exaggerate and twist points they can use to further their agenda and ignore facts that don’t serve that purpose.

Photo: AP Images



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