



Written by [Michael Tennant](#) on September 19, 2019

Worried About Global Warming? Consider These Failed Doomsday Forecasts

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In April, Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-N.Y.) [claimed](#) there were only “12 years” left to “cut emissions” before the world would be doomed to a future of ever-increasing temperatures. Hers, however, is just one of the most recent forecasts of environmental calamity. Since the late 1960s, doomsayers have been making similar predictions, none of which has come true, as the Competitive Enterprise Institute (CEI) documented in a [Wednesday blog post](#).



Chief among the early prophets of doom was biologist Paul Ehrlich, who warned in his 1968 book *The Population Bomb*, “The battle to feed all of humanity is over. In the 1970s hundreds of millions of people will starve to death in spite of any crash programs embarked upon now.” Ehrlich told the *Los Angeles Times* in 1967 that people would have to be sterilized involuntarily to prevent such a catastrophe. In 1969, he told the *New York Times*, “Unless we are extremely lucky, everybody will disappear in a cloud of blue steam in 20 years.” And in 1970, he claimed that within a decade, the oceans would be “dead” and Americans would be subject to food and water rationing.

Today, of course, the big problem isn’t starvation but obesity, something Ehrlich apparently never saw coming.

While these days we hear constantly about the need to combat “global warming,” in the 1970s, the forecast was for severe global *cooling*.

“Air pollution may obliterate the sun and cause a new ice age in the first third of the next century,” began a 1970 *Boston Globe* article. Scientist James Lodge told the paper that all the water in the rivers and streams of the United States would “boil dry” if people kept using more electricity and that the world would exhaust its oxygen supply in the 21st century.

The next year, the *Washington Post* reported that “the world could be as little as 50 or 60 years away from a disastrous new ice age.”

In 1974, *Time* magazine published a story arguing that droughts in Africa and floods in other parts of the world, unusually cold winters in the American West and unusually warm ones in New England and Europe, and increased ice and snow cover were all “part of a global climatic upheaval.” The “atmosphere has been growing gradually cooler for the past three decades,” warned the periodical, adding that it “may be the harbinger of another ice age.”



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Other alleged crises, such as the ozone hole and acid rain, turned out to be much ado about nothing, CEI shows.

Then there's the supposedly existential threat of global warming, as we have been told for the past three decades.

In the late 1980s, National Aeronautics and Space Administration scientist James Hansen forecast dramatic temperature and sea-level increases plus droughts. On the one hand, he claimed part of New York City would be underwater within 20 to 30 years, while on the other, he said water would be so scarce that restaurants would post signs saying, "Water by request only." Hansen also prophesied that there would be no Arctic ice in the summer by 2018. None of that, needless to say, has come to pass, yet Hansen is still treated as a climate expert.

In 1989, the United Nations predicted that by the year 2000, entire nations would be obliterated by rising seas. The Maldives, a group of islands in the Indian Ocean, was supposed to be underwater by 2018; it is, in fact, [doing quite well](#) as a tourist destination.

Other failed doomsday predictions: Snow would become exceedingly rare "within a few years" (the *Independent*, 2000). Famine within 10 years and a "Siberian" climate in Britain by 2020 (*The Guardian*, 2002 and 2004, respectively). No polar ice cap (Al Gore, 2008) or other Arctic ice (*Guardian*, 2013) within a handful of years.

Despite all these false prophecies, similar tales of doom and gloom, often spun by the very same people who made the incorrect forecasts, continue to make news and to influence public policy. Why? For one thing, the failures are seldom reported. More importantly, the ongoing appearance of a "climate emergency" gives government another excuse to grow. As Rahm Emanuel explained, politicians "never want a serious crisis to go to waste."

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