

NASA issues July heat warning as temperatures remain high



The World Health Organization (WHO) said the extreme heat was straining healthcare systems, hitting older people, infants and children. [Jorge Garcia/Reuters]

Houston, July 21 (RHC)-- A prominent NASA climatologist has said this July will probably be the world's hottest month in "hundreds, if not thousands, of years." This month has already seen daily records shattered. The trend of extreme heat is unmistakable and will likely be reflected in the more robust monthly reports issued later by United States agencies, said Gavin Schmidt in a NASA briefing with reporters on Thursday.

"We are seeing unprecedented changes all over the world – the heat waves that we're seeing in the US in Europe and in China are demolishing records, left, right and centre," he added. The effects cannot be attributed solely to the El Nino weather pattern, which "has really only just emerged", he said.

The warning from Schmidt comes as a wave of extreme heat, wildfires, torrential rain and flooding wreaked havoc across the world in recent days, raising new fears about the pace of climate change. The

World Health Organization (WHO) said the extreme heat was straining healthcare systems, hitting older people, infants and children.

On Thursday, Greece said archaeological sites, including the Acropolis, will be closed during the hottest hours of the day due to a new heatwave. The nation is preparing for further high temperatures until Sunday.

As Greece announced the restrictions, firefighters were still battling wildfires west of Athens, which have so far burned thousands of hectares.

In Spain, the heat peak has passed but temperatures remained high overall on Thursday, with readings above 25 degrees Celsius (77 degrees Fahrenheit) recorded at 120 of the 900 stations in the official meteorological network.

Temperatures in excess of 35C (95F) were forecast across the southern half of the country, leading authorities to warn of “very high to extreme” risk of fire.

In the Balkans, a Croatian firefighter was reported to have died during a deadly storm that swept the Balkans after a heatwave, bringing the death toll to six.

Emergency services in Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Serbia scrambled to restore electricity and clear the debris left over after Wednesday’s chaos.

Meteorologists said the storm was extremely powerful as it was formed after a string of very hot days.

Temperatures of 35C (95F) and above continued to menace China as parts of the country register record temperatures. Northwestern Xinjiang, where temperatures hit a record high 52.2C (125.9 F) on Sunday, remained blanketed in worse-than-usual heat while in neighbouring Gansu province some areas suffered intense heat while others warned of floods and landslides.

Beijing and other cities braced for severe flooding on Friday as summer storms rolled across many parts of China, while inland regions baked in intense heat, threatening to shrink the country’s biggest freshwater lake.

In India, rescue teams resumed a search on Friday for possible survivors of a massive landslide in the western part of the country that killed 16 people and was suspected to have trapped more than 100. Thick fog and heavy rain hampered already difficult rescue efforts even further on Friday, Indian television news channels said, more than a day after the incident occurred at midnight on Thursday.

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