American Meteorological Society

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For Immediate Release

NEW STUDY SHOWS TV METEOROLOGISTS CAN TEACH VIEWERS ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE

Airing a special series helped educate viewers about current scientific findings.

MARCH 19, 2014, BOSTON, MA – A new article published in the *Bulletin of the American Meteorological Society* (BAMS) showed that television station WLTX in Columbia, South Carolina, improved viewers' understanding of climate change and its local impact by airing special segments during news broadcasts.

Dr. Xiaoquan Zhao, associate professor of communications at George Mason University's Center for Climate Change Communication and lead coauthor of the article "Climate Change Education Through TV Weathercasts," said, "Our results showed that helping viewers connect the dots between local weather and climate improved their understanding of the causes, processes, and impacts of climate change."

Although the topic of climate change is viewed by some as controversial, the article points out that a majority of Americans, 70%, do believe global warming is happening. However, the article also noted that public understanding of the science behind it is more limited.

Since television meteorologists are trusted not just to provide each day's weather forecast, but to also provide accurate information on climate, the "Climate Matters" program was created with the help of WLTX Chief Meteorologist Jim Gandy and Climate Central, a non-profit research and journalism institution. The program, which consisted of a total of twelve segments airing over the course of one year, was funded by a grant from the National Science Foundation.

Following the airing of the "Climate Matters" segments, from August 2010 through July 2011, results showed that viewers who saw parts or all of the series were more likely to be certain that global warming is occurring and causing great harm. They were also more likely to believe that global warming is primarily human-caused and that most scientists agree that global warming is happening. Viewing of the program generally elevated concern about global warming.

Joe Witte, former television meteorologist and now a graduate student at George Mason University, said he had the idea for the program because of his experience as a national broadcaster for forty years. "As public faces for science, I saw that we TV meteorologists had opportunities and even responsibilities to help the viewers of our own communities see and understand the remarkable research behind climate change within our local areas."

The full article, coauthored by Xiaoquan Zhao, Edward Maibach, Jim Gandy, Joe Witte, Heidi Cullen, Barry A. Klinger, Katherine E. Bowman, James Witte, and Andrew Pyle, can be read on the American Meteorological Society's website at journals.ametsoc.org/doi/full/10.1175/BAMS-D-12-00144.1. The full series of "Climate Matters" videos can be seen on the WLTX website at wltx.com/weather/climate/

ABOUT AMS

Founded in 1919, AMS promotes the development and dissemination of information and education on the atmospheric and related sciences, technologies, applications, and services. Headquartered in Boston, with a second office in Washington DC, AMS has a membership of more than 13,000 professionals, researchers, scientists, educators, students, and weather enthusiasts. AMS publishes eleven atmospheric and related oceanic and hydrologic journals, both in print and online, to provide its mission of promoting and disseminating the most advanced scientific research, representing the latest information on global water, weather, and climate.

Each year, AMS sponsors an annual meeting that includes approximately 30 conferences/symposia as well as an additional 8-12 specialty meetings throughout the year. AMS also publishes more than 2,000 peer-reviewed scientific articles, as well as trade books and textbooks, provides the latest scientific research through a series of Capitol Hill briefings, and offers a variety of education programs for educators at the K-12, undergraduate and graduate level. For more information, visit AMS's website at Ametsoc.org.

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