

THE TRIBUNE

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Climate change could cause more violence

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Published: Thursday, April 22, 2010 11:12 AM CDT

Two Iowa State University professors have published research revealing that global warming would affect more than just sea levels and wildlife; it could also make the planet a more violent place.

The research was co-authored by Matt DeLisi, an associate professor of sociology and director of ISU's criminal justice program, and Craig Anderson, a Distinguished Professor of psychology and director of ISU's Center for the Study of Violence, who said part of their conclusion comes from what he calls the "heat hypothesis."

"The basic idea there is that in uncomfortably hot temperatures, people behave somewhat more aggressively than they normally would," Anderson said.

By using data on U.S. yearly temperatures and the number of violent crimes that took place between 1950 and 2008, the researchers deduced that an increase of 8 degrees in the United States would result in more than 100,000 additional violent crimes nationwide.

Anderson said at the current rate of warming, the average temperature is expected to rise by 8 degrees by the end of this century.

However, the rising temperature isn't the only reason global warming could increase violence, Anderson said. The research also concludes that some people who are already violence-prone could be pushed over the edge when environmental stress is applied to their lives.

Climate change also would increase food scarcity in parts of the world, and DeLisi said that would cause large groups of people to migrate elsewhere, causing increased violence between people groups.

"Really, the effects are going to be more indirect if those temperature changes affect the amount of food we can produce, coupled with population growth," DeLisi said.

DeLisi said a recent example of this type of "ecomigration" was the exodus of people from New Orleans in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. When refugees relocated to Houston, there was an increase in gang violence and homicides due to confrontations between gangs from the two cities, DeLisi said.

Anderson said the goal of this research is to help people realize that global warming will not only affect the environment, it also will affect society as a whole.

"There are a number of things that can be done proactively, but they won't be done unless we face the problem," Anderson said.

Earth Day at ISU

ISU is hosting several different events today and Friday, April 23, in celebration of Earth Week. Director of Sustainability Merry Rankin said used magazine sales, light-bulb giveaways and free bike tune-ups are

only a few of the ways the university is celebrating the planet this week.

There will be a cherry tree-planting ceremony at 4 p.m. today in front MacKay Hall, and the Ames community is invited to a large kite-flying event on central campus between 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. Friday.

"I encourage people to take advantage of the gorgeous weather and gorgeous campus," Rankin said. "Our community is so beautiful. Everything is blooming, so you can really have an appreciation for the Earth right now."

For a more detailed schedule of Earth Day and Earth Week events at ISU, visit <http://www.livegreen.iastate.edu/>.

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