



U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES COMMITTEE ON
SCIENCE, SPACE, & TECHNOLOGY

Opening Statement

Chairwoman Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX)

Environment Subcommittee Hearing:

Coping with Compound Crises: Extreme Weather, Social Injustice, and a Global Pandemic

Wednesday, September 30, 2020

Thank you, Chairwoman Sherrill, for holding this important hearing today.

Good morning and thanks to all our witnesses for being here. We are in an unprecedented moment in our nation. We have previously discussed the intersection of the COVID-19 pandemic and extreme heat on environmental justice communities.

These last few months have laid bare how these communities are disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic due to decades of social injustice. These same communities are often disproportionately impacted by extreme weather events that are exacerbated by climate change.

While we are working diligently across the globe to bring this pandemic under control, we cannot forget that we are just starting to address the impacts of climate change on our daily lives. These impacts are undeniable, and the increasing incidence of extreme weather events is a very visible example.

In 2020 alone we have seen unsurvivable storm surges due to hurricanes in the Gulf Coast, the devastation of Iowa's corn crop due to the Midwest derecho, and the largest wildfire in California's history.

As communities across the country grapple with these intersecting crises, it is clear that these crises are impacting not only our citizens' physical well-being, but also their mental health.

The ongoing stress and trauma due to the pandemic, and for some communities, evacuations due to extreme weather, can take a severe toll on their mental health.

As the former Chief Psychiatric nurse at the Dallas Veterans Affairs Hospital, I have seen first-hand how trauma can affect mental health. The types of compounding crises we are currently seeing will have both short-term and long-term effects on our communities. It is important that we work to collect the data and conduct the research that is necessary to understand the impacts of this trauma.

I look forward to today's discussion with this panel of expert witnesses to better understand what research is needed for us to improve our preparation for, communication of, and response to compounding disasters.

Thank you, I yield back.