

## Climate Change: Part II

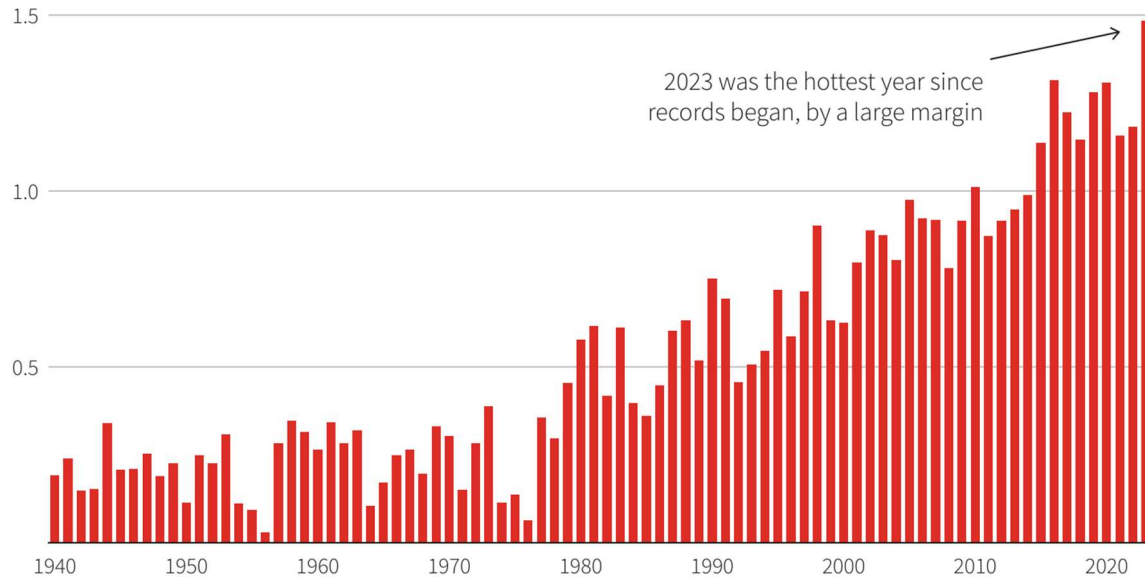
### A Quandary: What To Do?

Responsible citizens, corporations, and institutions face a challenge.

The evidence grows increasingly compelling; climate is changing and with it every region of the world is experiencing more frequent and more intense droughts, storms, floods, and health threatening temperature extremes. The two attached graphs from the European Union's Copernicus Climate Change Service tell the story.

### 2023 was the world's hottest year on record

Global surface temperature increase versus the average during the 1850-1900 pre-industrial period (°C)

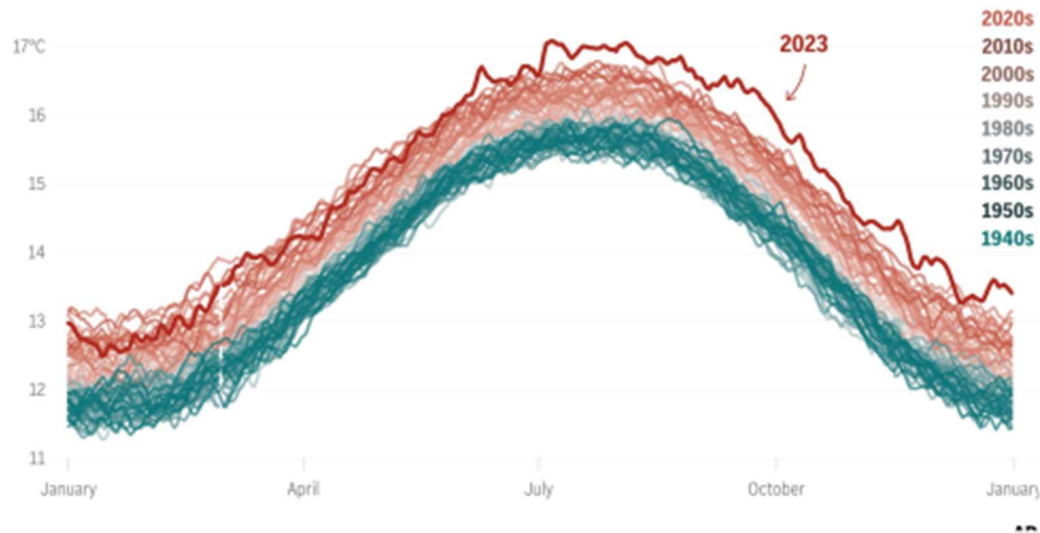


Source: Copernicus Climate Change Service/ECMWF

## 2023 is officially hottest year on record

On average, global temperatures in 2023 were 1.48 degrees Celsius (2.66 degrees Fahrenheit) higher than pre-industrial times. If annual averages reach above 1.5 degrees Celsius, the effects of global warming could become irreversible, climate scientists say.

Surface air temperature in °C, averaged over the entire globe



Yet, in the United States our National public policy response apparatus is stymied and broken. Thus, a quandary; What can responsible citizens, corporations and institutions do?

Before our public policy response mechanisms were broken we could expect our Congress, indeed our entire governmental/Constitutional authorities charged with protecting our citizens from threats to their health and well-being, to act. But they have not, so What to Do?

Simply put: get ahead of the game.

There are many things that can be done before the inevitable governmental mandates arrive that in sum will make those mandates manageable and less expensive. Documenting any of the following steps is essential as early actors can gain substantial savings and efficiencies while waiting for the mandates to kick in.

To start:

- 1) Using State and Federal protocols, measure, and document emissions of greenhouse gases the corporation or institution is responsible for releasing;
- 2) Take low cost, often even cost saving, actions such as replacing lighting fixtures with LED bulbs, and adjusting thermostat controls, even one- or two-degree adjustments, lower on heat, higher on AC can make a significant impact;
- 3) Know where your energy supply is coming from and evaluate whether it is possible to shift to less greenhouse gas emitting sources;
- 4) Alone or in cooperation with others make investments in alternative, non greenhouse gas emitting sources of energy;
- 5) Alumni donations to *alma maters* can be restricted to help finance shifts to alternative energy systems;
- 6) If an entity manages or controls surfaces such as roofs, (especially large flat roofed warehouses, buildings, etc.) or parking areas, work with others to install solar-photovoltaic panels to generate electricity. These areas are very extensive, are close to connections with the grid, and involve no loss of any natural areas;
- 7) Encourage employees to engage and participate in discussion of ideas and implementation efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions;
- 8) Provide electric vehicle charging stations at employee parking facilities;
- 9) Support building codes that require new structures to be oriented to take advantage of the sun's energy; and
- 10) There are many more ideas - the human imagination- like the sun- Is limitless and free, tap it.

It took more than 50 years to make a transition from wood-based energy systems to fossil fuel-based systems. Given our technological capacity now, it should take half that time to make a transition from fossil fueled systems to an all-electric system based on the sun's limitless and free energy.

Law firms are uniquely positioned to help this transition along. Giving clients assistance on how to document emissions of greenhouse gases and actions taken to reduce those emissions, making creative relationships with partners to achieve results in reducing emissions is the bread and butter of good legal services. The creative juices of the legal profession have an opportunity here to make difference. Rise to the occasion.

*This article was drafted by Tom Jorling, advisory board member of MHTL and co-drafter of the original Clean Air and Water Act. Mr. Jorling was a professor and Director of the Center for Environmental Studies at Williams College for over 20 years while serving appointed positions under President Reagan and President Carter regarding the Clean Air and Water Act. This article was reviewed and approved by Arthur Murphy, Katherine Hesse and Ety Singer. If you have any questions about this issue, please contact us at (617) 479-5000.*

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