

Meteorologists face death threats after recent storms

By Mary Boyte

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In the wake of recent destruction from Hurricane Helene and Hurricane Milton, conspiracy theories regarding human-made weather have floated around social media leading to many meteorologists receiving backlash and even death threats.

Among other conspiracy theories, including widely-spread falsehoods regarding Federal Emergency Management Agency relief efforts, many have taken to social media to spread theories that the recent hurricanes were man-made and that the U.S. government played a part in their creation or manipulation. Many meteorologists throughout the nation have reported receiving hate comments and death threats from citizens who believe the weather forecasters are intentionally spreading lies or aiding the government in a mass cover-up.

Katie Nickolaou, meteorologist for WLNS news in Lansing, Michigan, has received several threatening comments after posting social media videos debunking the conspiracy theories.

On Oct. 8, Nickolaou posted a screenshot of one of these social media interactions on X. The caption accompanying the screenshot says, 'Murdering meteorologists won't stop hurricanes. I can't believe I just had to type that.' The screen shot shows a comment on one of Nickolaou's posts in which she says hurricanes are not man-made. The comment says, 'Stop the breathing of those that made (the hurricanes) and their affiliates.'

Greenville-based meteorologist Chris Justus posted on social media Thursday responding to messages about human-controlled weather. Justus, chief meteorologist with WYFF News, was one of several meteorologists reporting on the front lines during Helene.

'I've been asked if the government or mankind in general is controlling the weather,' the post says. 'Let me clarify; I firmly believe God Almighty is the ONLY one in control. Personally, I believe we are an imperfect world and unfortunately, we also have an imperfect atmosphere that causes radical changes in our environment that results in severe weather.'

Justus goes on to say although his job as a meteorologist is rooted in scientific explanation, his Christian faith leads him to believe something larger is also at play.

Most meteorologists agree weather events are natural and do not involve any kind of human manipulation.

Politicians have added to the growing mistrust of meteorologists. In an X post, Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene said, 'Yes they can control the weather. It's ridiculous for anyone to lie and say it can't be done.'

President Joe Biden called the theories a 'reckless and irresponsible and relentless promotion of disinformation.'

Republican North Carolina Rep. Chuck Edwards released a statement responding to what he called 'outrageous rumors that have circulated online.'

'Nobody can control the weather ... Current geoengineering technology ... cannot be used to create or manipulate hurricanes,' Edwards said.

Submitted by LCDR Dennis Ruth, USN (Ret.)