



# Hurricanes: Their Nature and Impact on Society

*Roger A. Pielke Sr.*

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Losses to hurricanes in the 1990s total more than those incurred in the 1970s and 1980s combined, even after adjusting for inflation. This has led many to mistakenly conclude that severe hurricanes are becoming more frequent. In fact, according to recent research, the past few decades have seen a decrease in the frequency of severe storms and 1991 to 1994 was the quietest in at least 50 years. It does mean, however, that the world today is more vulnerable to hurricane impacts than it has ever been, which represents a serious policy problem. This book defines and assesses the hurricane problem, focusing primarily on the United States, in order to lay a foundation for action. The concept of vulnerability is used to integrate the societal and physical aspects of hurricane impacts. The book is unique in that it seeks to address both the scientific and societal aspects of hurricanes. While it focuses on the United States, it is intended to illustrate weather related impacts assessment that could be applied in other areas, and for phenomena other than hurricanes. More broadly, this book seeks to illustrate the beneficial uses (as well as limitations) of hurricane science to society. Explicit consideration of the relationship between science and society is much needed in an era when scientific research is under public and political pressure to demonstrate a better connection with societal needs.

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