



Disaster Preparedness Newsletter

April, 2009

Volume 2, Number 3

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New Approach for U.S. in Global Climate Change Talks

Saturday, March 28, 2009 11:33:51 AM
WASHINGTON (AP)

At its first negotiations on climate change, the Obama administration is trying to convince other countries that the U.S. does care about global warming and wants to shape an international accord.

After eight years on the sidelines, the U.S. says it is ready for a central role in developing a new agreement to slash greenhouse gases. But whether the U.S., which is the second largest source of heat-trapping pollution, is ready to sign onto a deal by year's end could depend on Congress.

The State Department sent climate envoy Todd Stern to Bonn, Germany, for the first of a series of largely technical meetings that begin Sunday. The talks are hoped to lay the groundwork for an agreement to be signed in December in Denmark.

Stern, in a telephone interview Thursday with The Associated Press from London, said it was important for him to attend and "make the first statement on behalf of the United States and say we're back, we're serious, we're here, we're committed and we're going to try to get this thing done." He added, "We want to convey that we mean it."

Yvo de Boer, executive secretary of the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change, which is hosting the Bonn talks, said participants "will be very excited" to hear Stern outline the basic principles that will guide the U.S.

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Other countries are expecting a new tone after eight years during which the Bush administration made clear its disdain for any climate discussions aimed at securing a commitment to mandatory greenhouse gas reductions.

This time the U.S. delegation represents the views of a White House committed to mandatory action on climate change. And unlike 1997, when the Kyoto Protocol was drafted, there is now a Democratic-controlled Congress moving to embrace mandatory limits on greenhouse gases. Back then, the United States lacked support for mandatory actions to achieve the reductions the U.S. had signed on to. Congress never ratified that accord and the Bush administration later rejected it outright, citing the lack of participation from developing countries.

That lack of involvement and the cost of emission cuts, in form of higher energy bills, have dominated the U.S. debate over Kyoto for years. Those issues have not have not disappeared.

But President Barack Obama has acted to reduce U.S. greenhouse gases and wants Congress to pass a cap-and-trade program that would cut global warming pollution 80 percent by mid-century.

"The president has embarked on a strong domestic program already and there is much more coming," Stern said at a briefing Friday in Berlin.

Stern said the U.S. position on an international agreement will be framed by what happens in Congress. The reductions expected to be required by Congress will be the basis for what the U.S. can commit to reducing, he said.

But Congress already is trying to address the recession, health care and other priorities. "This will be a big, big fight to get the domestic piece done," Stern conceded.

Many European countries want the U.S. to adopt stronger short-term targets, equal to a 25 percent to 40 percent reduction from 1990 levels by 2020. Obama has called for reaching 1990 levels by then, a roughly 15 percent cut. Stern has warned European leaders that their demands will lead to stalemate.

In Germany, the U.S. team is expected to spend most of its time listening and forming relationships rather than discussing concrete proposals.

That "is unfortunate given the intense timetable between now and Copenhagen, but understandable," said Jennifer Havercamp, who leads Environmental Defense Fund's international climate negotiations team. "It will not achieve a lot of substantive progress in the negotiations because the Obama team is so new."

Associated Press writer Vanessa Gera contributed reporting from Berlin.

On the Internet:

[U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change:](http://unfccc.int/2860.php)
<http://unfccc.int/2860.php>

[White House: http://www.whitehouse.gov/agenda/energy_and_environment/](http://www.whitehouse.gov/agenda/energy_and_environment/)

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Florida Climate Change

<http://www.dep.state.fl.us/climatechange/>

Florida's Department of Environmental Protection is working to provide sound science-based information to raise awareness among citizens and stakeholders and inform state level policy making as well as provide staff support to the Governor's Action Team on Energy and Climate Change.

Over the past three decades, leading experts have developed a strong body of scientific evidence documenting changes in global climate patterns as well as changes observed on the ground. The science is increasingly clear about the role of carbon emissions in changing our global climate. With 1,350 miles of coastline and most of our residents living in coastal communities, Florida is more vulnerable to the worst effects of climate change than any other state.



On July 13, 2007, Governor Charlie Crist signed a groundbreaking set of Executive Orders during the recent Serve to Preserve Florida Summit on Global Climate Change that put into place a new direction for Florida's energy future. The three Executive Orders represent the Governor's commitment to addressing global climate change, a promise to reduce Florida's greenhouse gases, increase our energy efficiency and pursue more renewable energy sources, such as solar and wind technologies, as well as alternative energy, such as ethanol and hydrogen. In addition, Governor Crist committed to partnering with Germany and the United Kingdom to discuss and promote initiatives that broaden the Kyoto Protocol and reduce the emission of greenhouse gases beyond 2012.

On the Internet:

[Executive Orders](#)

[Partnership Agreements](#)

[Rulemaking Workshops](#)

[Governor's Action Team on Energy and Climate Change](#)

[Governor's Climate Control Website](#)

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Governor's Action Team on Energy and Climate Change - State of Florida
<http://www.flclimatechange.us/background-policy.cfm>



Governor's Action Team on Energy and Climate Change
State of Florida

International

The international response to the problem of climate change took its first major step forward with the signing of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) at the Rio Earth Summit in 1992. The Convention sets an ultimate objective of stabilizing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions "at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic (human induced) interference with the climate system." It states that "such a level should be achieved within a time frame sufficient to allow ecosystems to adapt naturally to climate change, to ensure that food production is not threatened, and to enable economic development to proceed in a sustainable manner." Among other provisions, the Convention requires industrialized countries to prepare and update inventories of greenhouse gas emissions.

As its name implies, the UNFCCC was always intended to be a "framework" document -- something to be amended over time so that efforts to deal with climate change can be strengthened. The first addition to the treaty, the Kyoto Protocol, was adopted in 1997. It set mandatory targets for greenhouse gas emissions for most industrialized nations, aiming for an overall 5% reduction from 1990 levels. The Clinton Administration signed the Protocol but the Bush Administration withdrew U.S. support.

National

The Bush Administration has focused U.S. policy on climate research, development of new technologies, and on voluntary programs to reduce GHG emissions.

For more information, see:

White House Climate Change Fact Sheet (2005)

U.S. Climate Action Report (U.S. Department of State, 2002)

State & Regional

There is growing interest in the United States in state-level actions to address the effects of climate change and greenhouse gas emissions. More than 20 states have prepared a state climate action plan. Many states have held stakeholder

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Governor's Action Team on Energy and Climate Change - State of Florida

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processes similar to what Florida has launched, and those processes have led to new policies being proposed or adopted. Typically, the policies serve multiple aims such as improving air quality, reducing traffic congestion, securing reliable energy supplies, preserving land, or improving waste management, in addition to reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Examples of state action plans in process or completed include:

Arizona	Maine	Montana	Rhode Island
California	Maryland	New Jersey	South Carolina
Colorado	Massachusetts	New Mexico	Vermont
Connecticut	Michigan	North Carolina	Washington
Iowa	Minnesota	Oregon	

A number of states are addressing climate change on a regional basis (in addition to their individual efforts). Two prominent examples are:

[Western Climate Initiative](#)

[Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative.](#)

See also: [Western Governors' Association, Clean and Diversified Energy Initiative](#)

[On the Internet:](#)

[U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, State Action List](#)

[Pew Center on Global Climate Change, State Policy](#)



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Florida's Climate Change Predictions

Enjoy Miami While You Still Can!

May 15, 2007 - Spin by Matt Meltzer

<http://www.miamibeach411.com/news/index.php?/news/comments/florida-climate/>

It seems that global warming has become the environmental cause du jour, thanks no doubt to former Vice President Al Gore and his Oscar® winning film "An Inconvenient Truth." Living in South Florida, it is often difficult to tell if the temperature is going up, as it would simply go from "Hot" to "Uncomfortably Hot," without anyone noticing. So while a 68 degree December day may be evidence enough for northerners, we down here have little to worry about from climate change as we already roast on a regular basis, right?

Oh, yeah. Then there's that whole "melting of the polar ice caps" thing. That phenomenon going on now that threatens to raise ocean levels anywhere between 7 to 15 feet in the next 60 years depending on who you listen to.

And seeing as how our entire city looks like a cookie sheet with lights placed on top of the ocean, there may be reason for one or two of us to be a little concerned. For those unfamiliar, the rising temperature of the Earth is causing unprecedented melt off of glaciers in Greenland and Antarctica, which will potentially make low-lying coastal areas in the US, Canada and South America a modern-day Atlantis. Except with massive condos sticking out of the ocean to mark their presence.



Since preventive action has never really been the forte of American environmental policy, many cities are already talking about potential sea walls and other ways of keeping the rising tide from taking over their populations. In places where planning and efficient local government are a way of life, places like New York and Boston, this seems like a realistic possibility and one that is vital to the national interest. But South Florida? Not so much. Seeing

as how it takes us 15 years to expand an 18 mile expressway and we still haven't quite figured out how to stop flooding when it rains for more than a day and a half, something tells me this place is going to be some sort of apocalyptic wasteland in about 100 years.

EXT. DOWNTOWN MIAMI - DAY

Imagine if you will the skyscrapers of downtown and the condos of Brickell covered in vegetation and abandoned for a quarter century. Imagine our major thoroughfares like Biscayne Blvd. and South Dixie Highway under 7 feet of water. The only remnant of transportation will be the Metrorail, no doubt leading future anthropologists to think we were on the cutting edge of mass-transportation and that it is a

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shame such a culturally advanced city had to be ruined. Then they'll stumble on Hialeah and retract that whole statement.

In a city where corruption is commonplace and accepted, where the public good is always sacrificed for the benefit of political leaders, is it even a question that Miami will be the first major American casualty of rising oceans? Most video projections show areas as far west as the Palmetto being completely uninhabitable and the Keys being totally destroyed. This will effectively make Kendall the new South Beach and Homestead the new Key West. So buy up your property now. And what will be our local politicians' (and near-bankrupt and desperate real-estate developers') solution to all the displaced from Brickell and South Beach? My guess is dredging more of the Everglades. Because nothing solves an environmental crisis better than destroying wetlands.

Never mind the fact that the Everglades in South Florida sit a good 18 feet lower than Miami or Naples. You can always use the demolished buildings of downtown as landfill. Should this fail, Florida may end up resembling what it was at the turn of the 20th century: A state whose southern half is completely uninhabitable. So that placing of the capital in Tallahassee was only logistically inconvenient for about 100 years. The southern half of the state will be an interesting airboat ride attraction for Central and North Florida theme parks, examining the ruins of what was once the 11th largest city in America. There will no doubt be squatters living in abandoned penthouses at Portofino and the Yacht Club, fishing for their meals off their balconies and boiling salt water for drinking.

THE DOOMSDAY SCENARIO

Of course this doomsday scenario is wholly avoidable, but sadly Miami is just not the sort of place to ever sacrifice monetary gain for anything. So while trying to construct a sea wall, or God forbid trying to curb carbon dioxide emissions or regulating development, might ultimately be a better course of action for our region, no sane person should think our civic leaders have any intentions of telling anyone no until it is too late.

It is not that global warming is going to destroy the United States. Bangladesh, sure. Most of Africa, without a doubt. But much like with healthcare the rich always have enough money to survive and our country is, if nothing else, rich. But when it comes to excessive waste, unlimited concession to business and development and wanton disregard for the environment, South Florida is the undisputed champion. This is why while hope for New York, Los Angeles, Washington DC and other major coastal metropolitan areas is legitimate, the combination of low elevation and lower environmental awareness bodes very poorly for our region. If you think the real estate market is crashing now, imagine when people realize that the city will be uninhabitable in less than a century.

So wise up, Miami. This place may be doomed. I plan to enjoy the city for as long as it exists, but it may very well be the major American casualty of Climate. Don't buy anything too expensive, don't plan to die here (unless it is by drowning) and by no means should you expect anyone to have a solution that does not involve doing more damage than has already been done. Love it while you can, folks, because this city is not going to be here forever.

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Flood Prevention

<http://www.hialeahfl.gov/dept/planning/flood/>

What is Flooding?

Flooding is the most common natural disaster in the country. Floods can happen anywhere. Different parts of the same neighborhood can be prone to flooding for different reasons. Everyone is at risk of flooding. You can assess your risk for flooding by obtaining the flood maps for your location from FEMA at www.fema.gov

By choosing to purchase flood insurance, you can't lose. In fact, floods are often caused by storms, hurricanes, and water backup due to inadequate or overloaded drainage systems. Most homeowners insurance doesn't cover costly flood damage. The National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) is your primary source for flood insurance in the U.S. Since most cities participate in the NFIP, you can purchase flood insurance from a licensed private insurance company or independent property and casualty insurance agent in your state. Talk to your insurance agent if you have questions, would like additional information, and/or are ready to purchase a flood insurance policy. Your policy will take effect 30 days after your purchase.

Protect Your Property

There are things you can do to minimize or eliminate property damage before a flood event occurs. Grading your property, elevating and securing electrical appliances, placing all low-lying electrical fixtures on separate electrical circuits, and using flood-resistant materials on exterior surfaces are some ways you can help yourself. Under emergency conditions, sandbags can be used to shore structures, and elevating or covering furniture and valuables can help minimize damage.

Buildings can also be permanently retrofitted for better flood protection! The entire building can be elevated, flood proofing materials can be permanently affixed to the structure, or you can add a second story to the building, and use the bottom story for parking, access and storage. To reduce street flooding, many cities are implementing local drainage projects throughout the city and identifying and prioritizing future projects.

All new construction requires the issuance of building permits prior to construction. Permits are obtained after submittal and approval of building plans. An important part of this review process is the requirement that structures be built high enough and use proper design techniques to protect against flood damage.

If you plan to construct an addition to your house, to build a new house, to fill a property, or for any development, call the city's Building Department. They can assist you if obtaining information on how to submit the necessary permits.

If you see construction occurring without the proper permits, please call Code Enforcement Office to report these activities. Remember, buildings constructed improperly can be dangerous to the whole neighborhood!

Did you know that it is Illegal to throw anything - anything at all! - into the rivers, canals, lakes, or other waters. Do you know that nothing but rainwater is allowed to drain into the storm drains located in streets, curbs, and right-of-ways? Help us keep the waters and streets of the City clean! If you witness dumping of any liquid or materials into storm drains or waters in the City, please report these activities.

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Flood Prevention

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Flood Safety!

When severe flooding threatens your area, there are things you can do to protect your family and property. Here are some actions you can take:

- Do not walk or drive through standing or flowing water. There might be sinkholes or live electrical wires
- Avoid power lines that have fallen.
- Turn off the power in your house, including gas tanks.
- Choose a safe location. If at all possible, locate pesticides in an area where flooding is not likely. A good location will be downwind and downhill from sensitive areas such as homes and play areas, ponds or streams.
- Watch your step in damaged areas. Slip and fall accidents are a leading cause of injuries after a disaster occurs.
- Use caution when approaching animals after a disaster. Even domesticated animals can react to stress by biting.
- Do not smoke or use open flames in your house until you are sure no gas leaks exist.
- Even if you plan to stay home, have an evacuation kit ready just in case.
- If you have to leave your house, let out of town relatives know where you are going.

Listen and Watch for Flood Warning Notices!

The National Weather Service and NOAA continually monitor local weather conditions. If major flooding is anticipated within the city, NOAA will broadcast notices like Flood Warning, Urban Flood Advisory or Flash Flood Warning Notices. These notices will be broadcast through television and radio stations. These notices are intended to help residents prepare for the possibility of severe flooding in the neighborhood. Residents and businesses tune in to these broadcasts to prepare for flooding when it occurs.

Warning times for these events may be as long as five days for hurricanes, down to one to two hours notice for flash floods and urban advisories. The key is to keep aware of these notices when watching, listening to or reading the various media sources.



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12 Steps to Flood Prevention Awareness

Adapted from Lakeland, Florida

1. **Flood Hazard.** Flooding can occur almost anywhere. Find Flood Hazard risk areas by visiting www.floodsmart.gov and by looking at flood hazard risk profile.
2. **Flood Safety.** Do not walk through flowing water. Keep away from flooded areas, power lines, electrical wires, animals and snakes, etc. Look before you step. Electricity must be turned off by the Electric Company. Be alert for gas leaks.
3. **Flood Insurance.** Standard homeowner's insurance policies do not cover flood damage. Contact your insurance company for flood insurance or 1-800-427 4661 for information about the National Flood Insurance Program.
4. **Property Protection Measures.** Move needed items to upper floors. Use sandbags, plywood, plastic sheeting and lumber to help reduce flood damage.
5. **Natural and Beneficial Functions.** Floodplains absorb large amounts of rain, filter storm water runoff, reduce flooding, and provide wildlife habitat. Preserve the floodplain for its natural state.
6. **Flood Warning System.** Monitor local emergency broadcasts on television and radio for flood warnings and up to date information on flooding.
7. **Floodplain Development Permits.** Get permits before you build on, fill, alter, or re-grade your property in floodplain. Report suspected illegal activity to the Building Inspection Office.
8. **Substantial Improvement Requirements.** Get permits before you build on, fill, alter, or re-grade your property in floodplain. Report suspected illegal activity to the Building Inspection Office.
9. **Drainage System Maintenance.** Keep debris out of drainage swales and ditches. Report illegal dumping to the Code Enforcement Office.
10. **Know Flood Hazards.** Become familiar with areas in your city which are prone to flooding.
11. **Flood Hazard Maps.** Know where you stand! Flood Maps are available from FEMA at <http://www.fema.gov>
12. **Obtain an Elevation Certificate.** The Elevation Certificate provides a way for a community to document compliance with the community's floodplain management ordinance. They are a part of the National Flood Insurance Program.



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April Showers Bring May Suicides?

By Nancy Schimelpfening

According to the Priory Group, a seasonal variability in suicide rates exists worldwide, with more suicides occurring in the warm, sunny days of spring and early summer than any other time of the year. In the northern hemisphere, May and June are peak months for suicide, while the southern hemisphere sees a peak in the month of November.

No one is sure why this occurs, but scientists theorize that it has something to do with sunlight and how it affects hormones. It is well known that the shorter days of winter are associated with depression, which is called Seasonal Affective Disorder. It is thought that perhaps when spring returns people start to feel more energetic and this enables them to carry through on suicide plans that they were previously too depressed to carry out.

Suicide Prevention Resources, a non-profit organization based in New York, describes the following suicide warning signs:

1. Previous suicide attempts, "mini-attempts".
2. Explicit statements of suicidal ideation or feelings.
3. Development of suicidal plan, acquiring the means, "rehearsal" behavior, setting a time for the attempt.
4. Self-inflicted injuries, such as cuts, burns, or head banging.
5. Reckless behavior. (Besides suicide, other leading causes of death among young people in New York City are homicide, accidents, drug overdose, and AIDS.) Unexplained accidents among children and the elderly.
6. Making out a will or giving away favorite possessions.

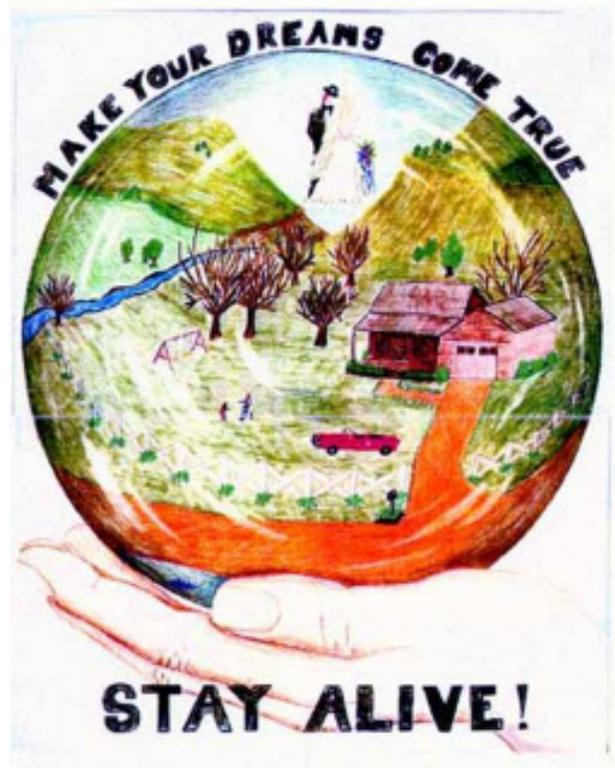
7. Inappropriately saying goodbye.

8. Verbal behavior that is ambiguous or indirect:

"I'm going away on a real long trip.",
"You won't have to worry about me anymore.",
"I want to go to sleep and never wake up.",
"I'm so depressed, I just can't go on.",
"Does God punish suicides?",
"Voices are telling me to do bad things.",

9. Requests for euthanasia information, inappropriate joking, stories or essays on morbid themes.

National Suicide Prevention Week
September 6 - 12, 2009



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Can Singulair Cause Depression?

By Nancy Schimelpfening

Tuesday April 1, 2008

On March 27 the FDA issued a safety alert regarding the asthma medication Singulair (montelukast). The alert was issued in order to inform healthcare professionals and patients about the agency's investigation into the possible link between Singulair use and depression and suicidality.

During clinical trials, depression was not reported as a side effect, however, drug makers are required to keep track of side effects reported to them after drugs go to market. During the past year, Merck & Co, Inc., which manufactures Singular, had received reports of tremor, depression, suicidality and anxiousness. In February of this year, Merck and the FDA began discussing how to disseminate this information to the public and the decision was made to interact face-to-face with prescribers and provide them with patient information leaflets to distribute.

The FDA is also working with Merck to review its study data as well as reviewing postmarketing reports. The FDA estimates that it will take about nine months to complete its investigation and the results will be released to the public once its review is complete.

At this time, it is not known whether there is a causal relationship between Singulair and depression and suicidality. Until further information is available, the FDA recommends that patients should not stop taking Singulair before discussing it with their doctor. It also recommends that healthcare professionals and caregivers should monitor patients taking Singulair for any suicidal thinking and behavior or changes in mood.

Singulair is a leukotriene receptor antagonist used to treat asthma and the symptoms of allergic rhinitis, and to prevent exercise-induced asthma.

The most up-to-date prescribing information for Singular can be found at <http://www.singulair.com>

April Fools Day!

<http://www.wikipedia.com>

April Fools' Day or All Fools' Day, although not a holiday in its own right, is a notable day celebrated in many countries on April 1. The day is marked by the commission of hoaxes and other practical jokes of varying sophistication on friends, family members, enemies, and neighbors, or sending them on fool's errand, the aim of which is to embarrass the gullible. Traditionally, in some countries, the jokes only last until noon: like UK, Australia, New Zealand and Canada, someone who plays a trick after noon is called an "April Fool".[1] Elsewhere, such as in Ireland, France, and the USA, the jokes last all day. Another origin is that April 1 was counted the first day of the year in France. When King Charles IX changed that to January 1, some people stayed with April 1. Those who did were called "April Fools" and were taunted by their neighbors.

Origins

The origin of April Fools' Day is obscure. One likely theory is that the modern holiday was first celebrated soon after the adoption of the Gregorian Calendar; the term referred to someone still adhering to the Julian Calendar which it replaced. In many pre-Christian cultures May Day (May 1) was celebrated as the first day of summer, and signaled the start of the spring planting season. An April Fool was someone who did this prematurely. In the eighteenth century the festival was often posited as going back to the times of Noah. An English newspaper article published on April 13th, 1789 said that the day had its origins when he sent the raven off too early, before the waters had receded. He did this on the first day of the Hebrew month that corresponds with April.[3] A possible reference to April Fools' Day can be seen in the Canterbury Tales (ca 1400) in the Nun's Priest's tale, a tale of two fools: Chanticleer and the fox, which took place on March 32nd.

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April Fools Day! ...Continued From Page 12

Other Prank Days in the World

Iranians play jokes on each other on the 13th day of the Persian new year (Norouz), which falls on April 1 or April 2. This day, celebrated as far back as 536 BC, is called Sizdah Bedar and is the oldest prank-tradition in the world still alive today; this fact has led many to believe that April Fools' Day has its origins in this tradition.

The April 1 tradition in France and French-speaking Canada includes poisson d'avril (literally "April's fish"), attempting to attach a paper fish to the victim's back without being noticed. This is also widespread in other nations, such as Italy (where the term Pesce d'aprile (literally "April's fish") is also used to refer to any jokes done during the day). In Spanish-speaking countries, similar pranks are practiced on December 28, día de los Santos Inocentes, the "Day of the Holy Innocents". This custom also exists in certain areas of Belgium, including the province of Antwerp. The Flemish tradition is for children to lock out their parents or teachers, only letting them in if they promise to bring treats the same evening or the next day.

In Poland, prima aprilis ("April 1" in Latin) is a day full of jokes; various hoaxes are prepared by people, media (which sometimes cooperate to make the "information" more credible) and even public institutions. Serious activities are usually avoided. This conviction is so strong that the anti-Turkish alliance with Leopold I signed on April 1, 1683, was back-dated to March 31.

In Scotland, April Fools' Day is traditionally called Hunt-the-Gowk Day ("gowk" is Scots for a cuckoo or a foolish person), although this name has fallen into disuse. The traditional prank is to ask someone to deliver a sealed message requesting help of some sort. In fact, the message reads "Dinna laugh, dinna smile. Hunt the gowk another mile". The recipient, upon reading it, will explain he can only help if he first contacts another person, and sends the victim to this person with an identical message, with the same result.

In Denmark the 1st of May is known as "Maj-kat", meaning "May-cat", and is identical to April Fools' Day, though Danes also celebrate April Fools' Day ("aprilsnar").

Some Jewish communities have a traditional event called a Purim spiel, which is similar in many ways to April Fools' Day. Fake newspaper articles are common.



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FEMA - Are You Ready for Floods?
<http://www.fema.gov/areyouready/flood.shtm>



Artic Melting



President Barrak Obama on Economic Disaster



Fargo Red River Flooding



Bolder, Colorado Blizzard