

## Comments on the New York Times Story on The Weather Channel

The evolution of The Weather Channel from a service providing real time information and short term weather forecasts into the arena of prime time documentary journalism is examined in a recent [New York Times article](#).

Both the Times article and the Weather Channel's portrayal of this evolution as inviolate is curious considering the New York Times storied history of disciplined transitional journalism founded on rigorous due diligence. At the risk of sounding rhetorical, one questions why the New York Times would allow the Weather Channel an apparent, "Get out of Jail Free Card" regarding this approach. As the networks vice president of program strategy is quoted as saying "If the Weather Channel isn't talking about climate change and global warming, then who is?" The obvious answer of course is, well, lots of people. Perhaps the veiled inference of her statement really is, "If the Weather Channel is not talking about climate change and global warming then who is QUALIFIED to". This would be a more obvious coercive stance. Yet, even within the original statement there is a topological trap. That quote separates climate change from global warming. Does that not differentiate global warming from climate change?

It then follows, why the disconnect? This is either a sloppy misappropriation of the intellectual goods by the Weather Channel or a purposeful attempt to separate the two. In either case it is surprising that the New York Times did not examine the obvious paradox of conflicting terms.

If it is an admission that the two are indeed separate, we applaud that statement. There is no denying that in recent decades we have seen a global warming but we and many others believe it is all part of natural climate change, that has been going since this planet we live on first formed. It may be as cold the next two decades as the last two have been warm.

It was interesting that they admit ratings are down since 2005, but their comments suggest they believe it is related to the same kind of sensory overload we all felt after weeks of 911, the Iraqi war and then the Katrina disaster in New Orleans when we were glued to the television coverage for many days. Ratings fell for all the networks as those issues slowly became less top of mind though no less important.

But maybe it relates to their programming decisions and the fact that the rank and file meteorologists and weather nuts tend not to believe the global warming hype and were turned off by Heidi Cullen's weekly segment Forecast Earth (formerly Climate Code) and offended by Heidi's call for decertification for all TV mets who didn't agree with man made global warming.

We think two other points need to be made. On the business cable networks like CNBC, during the business day when the markets are open there is full time, real-time coverage. After hours, they are free to do other programming related to stock picks like Jim Cramer's 'Mad Money' or just money and greed like Deal or No Deal. Well unlike the stock market, the weather doesn't stop at 4:15 pm EDT but is around the clock. So should their coverage of the weather.

Finally did you ever wonder why The Weather Channel does a 7 day forecast and on their web site a 10 day forecast but does not do a 30 day, 90 day or as in the case of the Climate Prediction Center, a 15 month outlook? Well it is because these extended range forecasts are based largely on climate forecast models that TWC forecasters and the channel decision makers apparently do not believe are accurate enough to warrant their coverage. Yet the channel is quick to believe and discuss on air the possible outcomes of climate models forecasts for 50 to 100 years from now. Are we to believe these models suddenly get better the farther out they go? Roger Pielke Sr. in this Climate Science [weblog](#) shows why that kind of thinking is absurd.

