

Warming Arctic may be causing jet stream changes

By Scott Neuman, NPR

Mark Twain once said: "If you don't like the weather in New England now, just wait a few minutes."

He was making an unknowing reference to the jet stream, which drives the weather over North America and Europe like a high-altitude conveyor belt. But increasingly, the jet stream is taking a more circuitous route over the northern latitudes, meaning weather systems hang around longer than they used to. And, a warming Arctic is probably to blame, says Jennifer Francis, a professor at Rutgers University Institute of Marine and Coastal Sciences.

Francis – who says it's too early to know if the well-established Arctic warming is caused by man or some natural phenomenon – was speaking during a session on Arctic change at the annual meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science in Chicago on Saturday.

The wayward jet stream could account for the persistently severe winter weather this year in the U.S. and Britain, as well as California's long drought.

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