

Day of Atonement: 2026

But there's no atoning for what we have brought upon ourselves

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Today marks the official kickoff of Climate Week and also happened (it is now past sundown) to be Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement), the holiest day on the Jewish Calendar. But as high temperature records continue to fall all around us and global GHG emissions continue to rise unabated, it's clear that there's no atoning for what we have brought upon ourselves. Here in St. Louis, last week ended with [three consecutive days of record high temperatures](#), bookending our summer with the [record heat of this past March](#) – when we had four record daily highs, three of which set new records for the earliest year it had never been that hot.

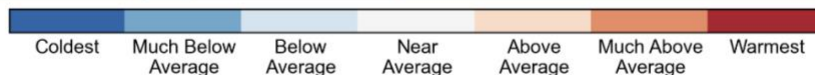
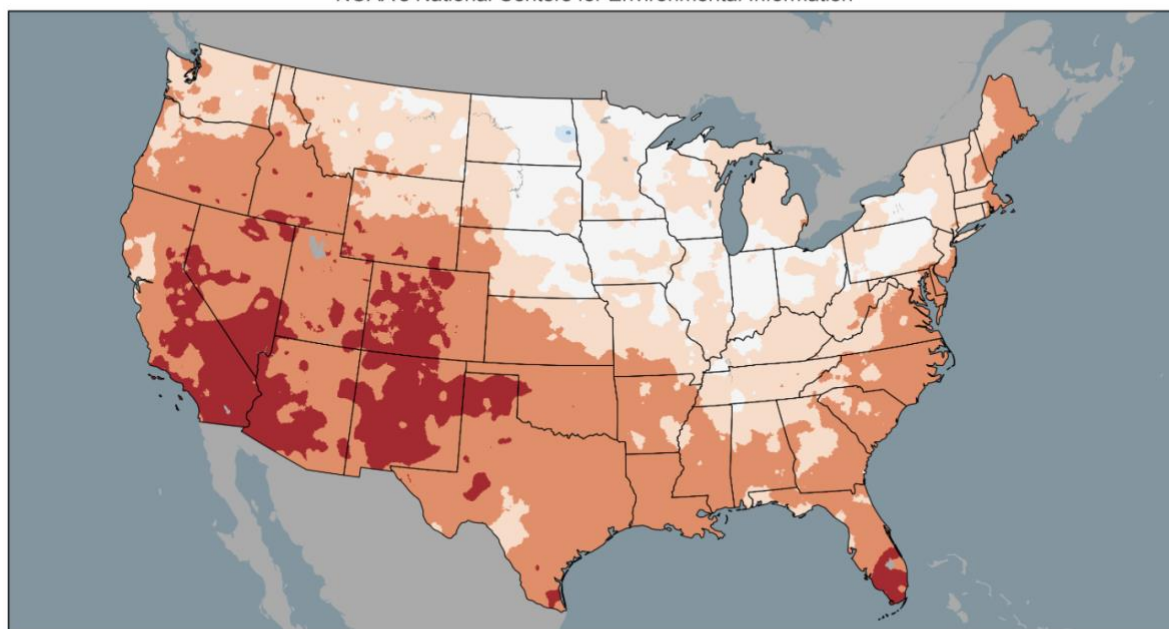
Nationally, the meteorological summer (June through August) was the hottest ever recorded, and August itself set a record for the hottest month, per the latest report from [NOAA](#) (see map below).

Mean Temperature Percentiles

August 2026

Ranking Period: 1895–2026

NOAA's National Centers for Environmental Information



Created: Sep 04 2026
Source: nClimGrid-Monthly

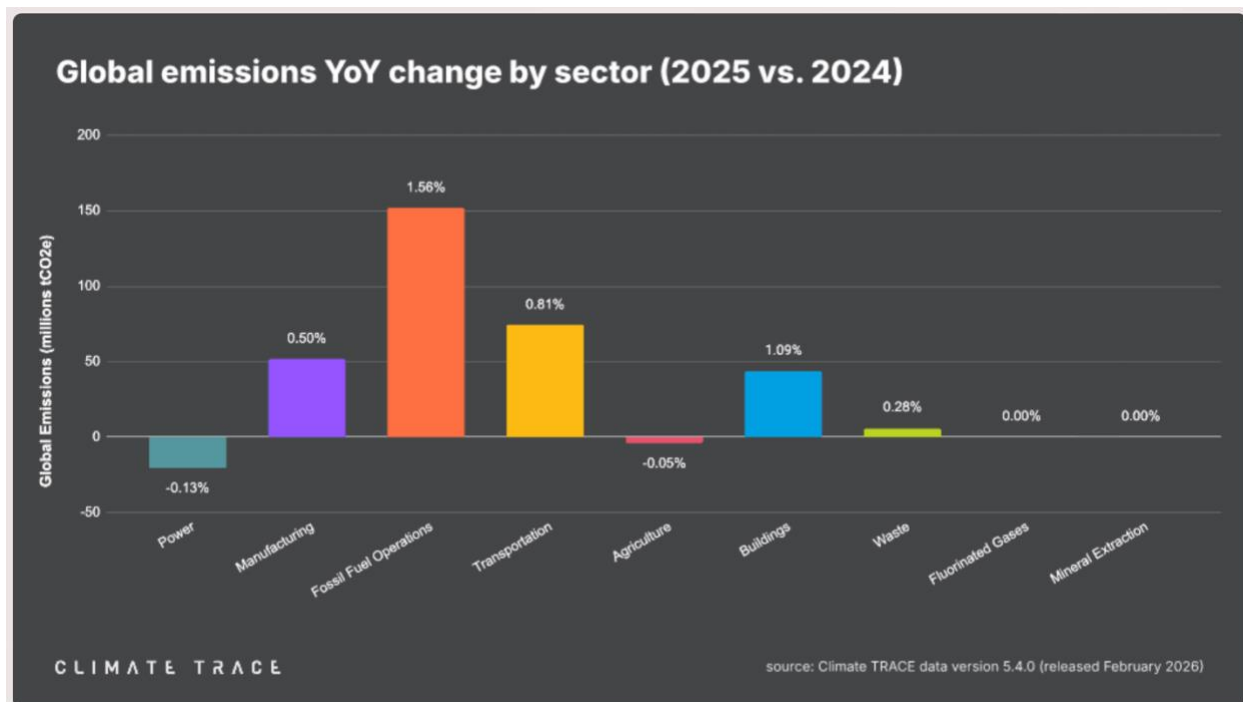


August 2026 U.S. Mean Temperature Percentiles Map.

Globally, this was also the [hottest August on record, according to UNEP](#), and the Pacific Ocean's [El Niño](#) is strengthening rapidly in the Pacific Ocean, raising the prospect of months of extreme

heat, floods, drought, and disruptive weather around the globe, according to a separate report from [UNEP](#).

Meanwhile, monitoring data from [Climate TRACE](#) show that global GHG emissions hit a new record high of more than 60 Gigatons CO₂e in 2025, with Russia, China, and several other countries (including the US) showing major increases. Interestingly the greatest year-on-year increases took place in Fossil Fuel Operations, completing refuting the myth that the world has somehow already shifted away from fossil fuels to renewables (see the figures below).



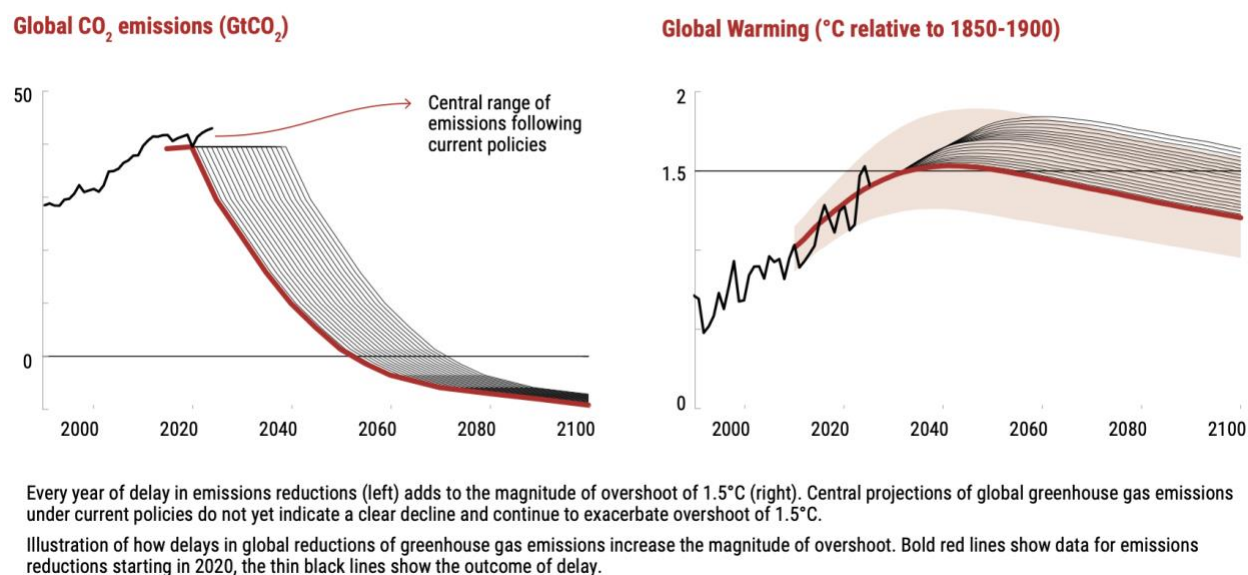
Top 10 Countries with Largest Emissions Increase			Top 10 Countries with Largest Emissions Decrease		
Country	Absolute Change vs. 2024	Percentage Change vs. 2024	Country	Absolute Change vs. 2024	Percentage Change vs. 2024
1. Russia	51.6 Mt	1.64%	1. India	-27.5 Mt	-0.65%
2. China	48.8 Mt	0.28%	2. Mexico	-7.2 Mt	-0.88%
3. Kazakhstan	22.7 Mt	5.77%	3. Australia	-7 Mt	-0.86%
4. Saudi Arabia	22 Mt	2.14%	4. Japan	-5.3 Mt	-0.41%
5. Brazil	19.5 Mt	1.40%	5. Ukraine	-2.9 Mt	-1.02%
6. United States	16.2 Mt	0.20%	6. Greece	-2.7 Mt	-2.81%
7. Libya	15.4 Mt	10.79%	7. France	-2.2 Mt	-0.50%
8. Iraq	15 Mt	3.01%	8. Poland	-2.2 Mt	-0.55%
9. Indonesia	13.2 Mt	0.86%	9. Ecuador	-1.5 Mt	-1.67%
10. Pakistan	12.5 Mt	2.08%	10. Germany	-1.5 Mt	-0.20%

CLIMATE TRACE

source: Climate TRACE data version 5.4.0 (released February 2026)

Against this backdrop, a group of scientists affiliated with the United Nations ([UNEP](#)) finally began to admit what has been obvious from the data for decades, that we are blowing past the artificial climate target of 1.5°C, set just 11 years ago in Paris. However, these same scientists still haven't yet accepted the reality that the already accelerating pattern of warming is certain to intensify, due to our completely ineffective efforts to curb global GHG emissions. The report continues to include the absurdly ridiculous figures shown below – featuring completely fanciful projections in which the growing emissions magically reverse current trends and blissfully approach the ever-elusive “Net-Zero” target by mid-century. We'll see

Figure 1.2: Futures available and futures lost



What then, are we to do? As noted in a series of earlier blogs in this space (e.g., [March 2026](#), [January 2025](#), [September 2024](#)) the only rational course of action at this point is to shift our focus to adaptation. We must make our world's supply chains and other systems more resilient in the face of inevitable and accelerating climate change.

I spend most of my time working in agriculture and food systems. Farmers on the front lines of the climate crisis are dealing with intensifying extreme weather challenges every day. They need to be properly incentivized to adopt practices (like no-till) that help build resilience, based on improvements to soil health – helping to stop extreme precipitation from causing runoff and keeping moisture within the soil profile as a reserve against possible drought events later in the season.

Yes, some of these common-sense practices also reduce the use of diesel and help store a bit additional carbon, but the net carbon impact – even if fully adopted on every available acre of cropland globally would have only an incremental positive impact on GHG emissions (perhaps a Gigaton or two of CO₂e). Does this small net mitigation benefit warrant the establishment of elaborate systems for compensating farmers via a ‘carbon market mechanism’? Perhaps, but incentivizing farmers based on their contribution to resilience seems more rational to me. It will be interesting to see where market forces take us.

So, in the end, is there any ‘atoning’ possible for humanity when it comes to repenting from our underlying addictions to burning fossil fuels and the other habits that result in global warming? Theoretically, I suppose the answer is yet. But that would require a complete a rewiring of human nature, which I take as being theologically impossible. As Paul wrote in Romans 3 (quoting Psalm 14): “There is none who does good, no, not one.” [NKJV]

This Day of Atonement (just completed here in St. Louis) is a time to take stock of our personal sins and commit to do better. However, as a world community, I believe we must accept the harsh reality that we have irreversibly set our planet on an unavoidable path of climate disruption that can’t be stopped. So, what should we do? As noted previously, I’m now pursuing another aspect of transforming food systems to make them more resilient, the use of Urban Ag to shorten supply chains and bring renewal to our blighted neighborhoods here in St. Louis. Over the past ten months, I’ve organized a couple of workshops on the topic and the report from the most recent one (held on July 29) will be out shortly. I hope to enlist others in this effort to help bring some comfort to our neighbors as climate and other conditions worsen here in St. Louis and around the world. I pray that others will join us.