

Sara Nickel

Survey Story

Oakland County residents said the weather has become harder to predict in recent years, with cold snaps, sudden warm-ups and heavy snowfall reflecting the impact of climate change on local winters.

“It’s coat weather one day, then T-shirt the next,” said Phil Whitworth, a 56-year-old resident of Rochester Hills. “I’ve lived in England, which has a bad climate, but the weather here is not routine.”

Scientists say that these shifts aren’t surprising. According to [*Woodwell Climate Research Center*](#), global warming is disrupting weather systems, leading to more extreme and inconsistent temperatures.

Experts explain that while global averages are rising, the warming atmosphere traps and shifts Arctic air currents. This intensifies both hot and cold extremes. Climate change typically brings long-term warming and contributes to severe winter storms.

For Oakland County residents, that means more unpredictable winters that alternate between extreme and mild conditions. Some said these changes have affected their lives.

Cheryl Herren, who lives in Auburn Hills, said this past winter her car slid on black ice during a whiteout, resulting in it being totaled. “My family was affected by climate change, with my car being wrecked,” she said. “We’ve never had such harsh winters before.”

Others noticed the financial toll of the climate swings. William Angliss, a Pontiac resident, said his heating and cooling bills have “jumped significantly” compared with previous years. “The HVAC runs nonstop it’s wasted money,” he said.

Shayna Matteka, a biology student at Oakland University, said she's worried about how climate change will affect the future. "Less stability means less predictability," she said. "We need to cut down on our [carbon] emissions. More public transport, sharing, and less of an individualistic society."

Several residents say they are taking steps to adapt, from driving less in the winter to improving home insulation and practicing greener living. Others believe broader action is needed. "We can do our part, but major politicians need to lobby for industries to reduce emissions; our climate is just going to get worse without them," Caterina DiCosmos, of Oxford, said.

Despite the challenges, residents said they love Michigan's four seasons. They just hope the familiar weather will return one day.

"I don't mind the cold," Whitworth said. "I just wish climate change would let it stay consistent, so I can enjoy it."