

Andy's Column

Western Washington

Friday March 28, 2008

AskAndy@PSE.com

Vol. 2

Weather is like a box of chocolates: You never know what you're going to get

So much for global warming!

So here we are, turning the calendar to April, and we're still shivering from a rare spring snow on some of the higher hills around the area. And trust me, I know what you're thinking: *Ha, so much for global warming!*

Believe me, I'm with you that it's pretty easy to think the Nobel Prize committee is a little out of touch when you have to scrape ice off the windshield at this time of year. Honestly, it just goes against your gut reaction to put "fresh snow" and "rising temperatures" in the same sentence. Hey, I tried saying it myself with Fahrenheit or Celsius – even Centigrade and Kelvin – and it still sounds nuts to talk warmer weather when there's snow on your driveway.

And telling somebody who's just banged fenders on a slick road that the climate is changing – pointless!

But that's where common sense can be misleading. The key is the difference between weather and climate. Yes, they both relate to snowflakes and raindrops and sunshine and clouds, but that's about where the similarities end.

Climate, the expression goes, is what you expect. Weather, on the other hand, is what you get. Kind of like Forrest Gump and his "life is like a box of chocolates."



Andy Wappler

Andy Wappler is a senior public relations manager at Puget Sound Energy. He joined PSE in February 2008 after being chief meteorologist at KIRO-TV. He looks forward to hearing from you at AskAndy@PSE.com.

This particular fact of life was, ahem, a source of occasional embarrassment during my days of television forecasting. With certainty, I would boldly pronounce that our climate on a given day might virtually guarantee fair skies – only to be hit by a face full of "weather" when stepping out the studio door into a king-size thundershower.

Unexpected snowstorms aside, the Who's Who of atmospheric scientists is solid on the subject of climate change. Are their findings troubling? No doubt. But fortunately we can all be a part of the solution by taking advantage of a whole range of new energy efficient products for our homes and businesses. The less energy we use, the bigger the impact we can have. Nice.

Want to know more? Then drop me a line at AskAndy@PSE.com, or come on down to the upcoming Green Festival at the Washington State Convention Center in Seattle. It runs April 12 and 13, and I'll be one of the speakers (1 p.m. Sunday), along with the energy experts from PSE. My talk will be on easy ways we all can save the planet one utility bill at a time.

The goal in writing this column is to spur questions and offer answers related to global warming, with the aim of making it all a little more local. Hit the Green Festival, and find out what you can do.

And if it snows while you're driving there, remember: it was weather, not climate, that just sent you spinning into a ditch.