

WINTER™ — PROPERTY OF THE WEATHER CHANNEL®



With a lot of self-justifying, back-patting hoopla today, The Weather Channel announced it's decided unilaterally to assign names to winter storms.

During the upcoming 2012-13 winter season The Weather Channel will name noteworthy winter storms. Our goal is to better communicate the threat and the timing of the significant impacts that accompany these events. The fact is, a storm with a name is easier to follow, which will mean fewer surprises and more preparation.

Yes, fewer surprises. Just the one about winter's natural disasters being branded by The Weather Channel.

There's no indication that any federal government entity, including NOAA, has sanctioned this scheme let alone the names.

...until now, there has been no organized naming system for these storms before they impact population centers.

One of the reasons this may be true is that there is no national center, such as the National Hurricane Center, to coordinate and communicate information

on a multi-state scale to cover such big events. The National Centers for Environmental Prediction's Hydrologic Prediction Center (HPC) does issue discussions and snowfall forecasts on a national scale but it does not fill the same role as the NHC in naming storms. ...

At this point The Weather Channel's management breaks their arms with back-patting, lauding their efforts while calling it a bunch of euphemisms for team-playing:

...it would be a great benefit for a partner in the weather industry to take on the responsibility of developing a new concept.

This is where a world-class organization such as The Weather Channel will play a significant role. We have the meteorological ability, support and technology to provide the same level of reporting for winter storms that we have done for years with tropical weather systems. ...

In the absence of any government inputs, the selected storm names for this season appear to be intellectual property of The Weather Channel.

But you didn't think that natural disasters could be co-opted, branded, and marketed!

Let's follow the money behind this brave new branding program. Not only does NBCUniversal (owned jointly by Comcast and GE) and The Blackstone Group own The Weather Channel—so does Bain Capital.

Yeah, THAT Bain Capital, a.k.a. Mitt Romney's "former" employer.

Will these corporations sue every non-NBC network and news outlet that uses these The Weather Channel-generated storm names? Or will they insist that every entity using these names provide free promotion of The Weather Channel by

way of attribution?

Surely you can see it now, at the bottom of every local weather report: *This storm name brought to you by The Weather Channel®.*

Let's also look at the holdings of GE, Blackstone, and Bain, to see how they might benefit from this nifty new naming nexus.

GE may own business involved in wind energy production, but it's been invested for decades in traditional energy and transportation businesses, all of which rely on fossil fuels.

Blackstone has owned chunks of automotive parts businesses along with Houston-based Dynegy, a business wholly consisting of fossil fuel-based energy production.

And then there's Bain; its holdings make it more like NBCUniversal's joint venture owner Comcast, in that it owns communications outlets Clear Channel. How nifty that weather reports on Clear Channel might disseminate the branded winter storm names!

In other words, these corporations could own and resell the names of the storms spawned by increasingly volatile climate, created by their other climate changing activities—uh, profit centers.

Welcome to the vertical integration of climate change.

Enjoy it while you can for free; any time now the corporate suits will figure out how to monetize this brand, *Climate Change™, property of The Weather Channel®.* Then you'll have to pay for licensing or provide attribution before you can discuss it.