

## **VAIPL on Hurricane Ida and a Future of Extreme Weather**

Virginia Interfaith Power & Light joins with the nation in observing with sorrow the effects of Hurricane Ida in Louisiana and other parts of the country. Like Hurricane Katrina 16 years before, Ida hit the coast of Louisiana on Sunday, with howling 150 mph winds causing devastating destruction, and leaving over a million households without power and access to clean water and basic services, all amid a stifling summer heat that could reach close to 90 degrees Fahrenheit in the region for the next few days. Even here in Virginia, a state of emergency was declared as a result of Ida's remnants. As is always the case, the population most likely to suffer are the poor and disenfranchised.

A future of rising temperatures and extreme weather — stronger and more frequent storms and heatwaves, combined with intense drought and the resulting wildfires — is unavoidable in the coming decades, according to an August 9 report by the U.N. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), an international panel of scientists. But the direst outlooks can still be averted, the experts said, if the world's countries stop burning fossil fuels and take other immediate steps to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from human activities. No region of the Earth has escaped the effects of climate change, and even if emissions were immediately reduced to no more than the amount that the Earth's soil, plants, and oceans could absorb naturally, some of the impacts already set in motion would be irreversible within centuries or millennia, the report says.

The IPCC report reflects what Pope Francis wrote in his encyclical *Laudato Si', on Care for Our Common Home*, which said, "Doomsday predictions can no longer be met with irony or disdain. ... The effects of the present imbalance can only be reduced by our decisive action, here and now. We need to reflect on our accountability before those who will have to endure the dire consequences."

That's where people of faith and conscience come in. We are faced with a dual challenge. While we must sharply reduce emissions, especially by stopping the burning of fossil fuels, we must also ramp up efforts to help communities prepare to withstand the likely increase of extreme weather events.

Virginia Interfaith Power & Light applauds the efforts of organizations to provide comfort and support to victims of these disasters, and we pledge to continue our efforts to press governmental officials — especially in Virginia — to take bolder, immediate action on climate change, and to address the impacts of environmental injustice.