

Five Side Effects of Global Warming

Due to global warming, the average temperature of the Earth's surface is steadily increasing. Although some controversy still exists over the primary causes of global warming, the Natural Resources Defense Council places the blame on human activity and on air pollutants. Air pollutants, such as carbon dioxide, collect in the atmosphere and trap dangerous UV rays closer to the Earth's surface – resulting in temperature changes that adversely affect life on Earth.

Effect on **Droughts**

According to a 2006 ABC News Report, global warming has an effect on droughts – leaving farmers struggling to make a living. The warmer air is, the more moisture it absorbs from the ground. Increased temperatures worldwide due to global warming result in greater moisture absorption and more droughts. Without adequate soil moisture, farmers worldwide face financial hardship due to increased trouble producing crops. The danger isn't restricted to farmers, however. The world's demand for fruits, vegetables, and grains doesn't decrease due to drought. Thus, global warming can have an effect on food shortages and on consumers paying higher prices for food.

Effects on **Flooding**

Although the warmer air caused by global warming can result in drought, it can also cause dangerous floods. Warmer air holds a greater amount of moisture than cooler air, but it can't contain the moisture indefinitely. Kevin Trenberth, with the National Center for Atmospheric Research, claims that when the air eventually releases the built up water vapor, heavier rainfall is the result – resulting in flooding in some parts of the world. Like droughts, floods can have adverse impact on crop production. Severe floods can easily be considered natural disasters as they have the potential to destroy property and take lives.

Effects on **Coral Bleaching**

Coral reefs throughout the world's oceans provide food and shelter for fish, sea turtles, crabs and other aquatic life forms. Global warming has an effect on the warmer ocean temperatures, cause the coral reefs to expel algae, turn white, and die – a process known as "bleaching." Dr. Nicolas Graham, of the University of Newcastle, warns that the phenomena will continue to worsen over time, causing regional extinctions and significantly reducing the diversity of fish in certain areas of the world.

Effects on **Animal Extinction**

Many animal species are dependant upon a steady climate for their livelihood. Global warming is a particular threat to creatures living in the Arctic, where the ice is melting more quickly than ever before. National Geographic reports that over the past three decades, two thirds of the Arctic's Adelie penguin population has died off. Polar bears are also feeling the effects of global warming as their primary food source, fish, move to colder, deeper waters and their habitat slowly melts away. Dr. Ian Stirling, a polar bear biologist, fears that if the Arctic's ice disappears altogether, polar bears face almost certain extinction.

Effects on **Stronger Hurricanes**

Hurricanes develop when warm air rises above the surface of the ocean, allowing cooler, circulating air to swirl in and take its place. The cooler, circulating air grows warmer and begins to rise as well – and a hurricane is born. The warmer the ocean's surface, the more quickly it warms the air directly. This causes faster air displacement and stronger hurricanes. According to James Elsner, a meteorologist with Florida State University, the wind speed of hurricanes has increased significantly since 1981. Elsner attributes this change to warmer ocean temperatures due to global warming.

Although questions still remain regarding the primary cause of global warming, the emission of greenhouse gases by motor vehicles and power plants contributes to the phenomenon. The recent push toward "going green" aims to reduce the pollution humans contribute to the atmosphere and stop the progression of global warming.