

THE BASICS ON Climate change

What we know

Carbon pollution from burning fossil fuels like coal, oil, and natural gas is warming our planet and causing climate change.



Air pollution

It's simple: the more carbon pollution in the air, the more the sun's energy gets trapped as heat. Which means things keep getting hotter. You've almost certainly heard the phrase "global warming"? In fact, the world has already gotten nearly 1°C warmer since 1880.

Temperatures

Warmer temperatures have real consequences for all of us—not just for polar bears. Sea levels around the world have risen nearly 20cm (7.8 inches) since 1901, swallowing entire islands and creeping closer to populated areas of great coastal cities like New York, Melbourne, and Dakar.

Heat

Plus, extreme weather events like hurricanes, floods, and droughts are becoming more frequent and intense. Witness the devastation in 2017 as Hurricane Harvey tore through the Caribbean and southern US, destroying homes and leaving millions without power for weeks and even months.

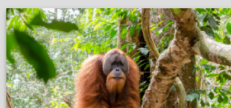
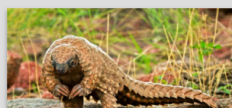
A quote from...




Steven Hawking

One can see from space how the human race has changed the Earth. Nearly all of the available land has been cleared of forest and is now used for agriculture or urban development. The polar icecaps are shrinking and the desert areas are increasing. At night, the Earth is no longer dark, but large areas are lit up. All of this is evidence that human exploitation of the planet is reaching a critical limit. But human demands and expectations are ever-increasing. We cannot continue to pollute the atmosphere, poison the ocean and exhaust the land. There isn't any more available.

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The atmosphere

The atmosphere is a dynamic fluid that is continually in motion. Both its physical properties and its rate and direction of motion are influenced by a variety of factors, including solar radiation, the geographic position of continents, ocean currents, the location and orientation of mountain ranges, atmospheric chemistry, and vegetation growing on the land surface. All these factors change through time. Some factors, such as the distribution of heat within the oceans, atmospheric chemistry, and surface vegetation, change at very short timescales. Others, such as the position of continents and the location and height of mountain ranges, change over very long timescales. Therefore, climate, which results from the physical properties and motion of the atmosphere, varies at every conceivable timescale.

Climate is often defined loosely as the average weather at a particular place, incorporating such features as temperature, precipitation, humidity, and windiness. A more specific definition would state that climate is the mean state and variability of these features over some extended time period. Both definitions acknowledge that the weather is always changing, owing to instabilities in the atmosphere. And as weather varies from day to day, so too does climate vary, from daily day-and-night cycles up to periods of geologic time hundreds of millions of years long. In a very real sense, climate variation is a redundant expression—climate is always varying. No two years are exactly alike, nor are any two decades, any two centuries, or any two millennia.

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