

Melting glacier worries scientists

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Scientists monitoring a Greenland glacier have found it is moving into the sea three times faster than a decade ago, The Independent reported Monday.

Satellite measurements of the Kangerdlugssuaq glacier indicate it is dramatically shrinking -- probably due to climate change,

The glacier on Greenland's east coast is about 3,280 feet thick, 4 1/2 miles wide, extends more than 20 miles into the ice sheet and drains about 4 percent of the Greenland ice sheet.

The rate at which glacial ice melts is important. For example, if the Greenland ice sheet melted, it would raise sea levels by up to 23 feet, inundating large areas of low-lying land, including London and much of eastern England.

Measurements taken in 1988 and in 1996 indicated the glacier was moving at a rate of between 3.1 and 3.7 miles annually. Measurements taken this summer show it's now moving at 8.7 miles a year.

Gordon Hamilton, professor of Earth sciences Maine University's Climate Change Institute, told the Independent: "This is a dramatic discovery. These new results suggest the loss of ice from the Greenland ice sheet ... could be larger and faster than previously estimated."

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