

Scientists predict climate change effects

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Harvard University researchers say climatic changes will significantly alter the health of humans and ecosystems worldwide.

The study indicates the changing climate has the potential for abrupt and widespread economic consequences.

"We found that impacts of climate change are likely to lead to ramifications that overlap in several areas, including our health, our economy and the natural systems on which we depend," said Dr. Paul Epstein, the study's lead author and associate director of the Center for Health and the Global Environment at Harvard Medical School.

The study outlines effects of climatic change with regard to infectious diseases; extreme weather events; and ecosystems such as forests, agriculture, marine habitat and water. Economic implications, as well as possible near-future affects, are projected for each case.

The study warns that warming and extreme weather can affect the breeding and range of disease vectors such as mosquitoes. Scientists also note increasing levels of carbon dioxide may be contributing to the rising incidence of asthma due to increased pollen production.

The study -- released during a Tuesday news conference at the American Museum of Natural History in New York -- was co-sponsored by Swiss Re and the U.N. Development Program.

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