

UN panel: Global warming human-caused, dangerous (Update)

August 26 2014, by Seth Borenstein



This Aug. 19, 2014 file photo shows flash flood waters from the overrun Skunk Creek flood I-10 in northwestern Phoenix. Global warming is here, human-caused and can already be considered dangerous, a draft of a new international science report says, warning that it is increasingly likely that climate change could be irreversible. The United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change on Monday sent governments a final draft of its synthesis report, which combines three earlier, gigantic documents by the Nobel Prize-winning group. There is little in the report, that wasn't in the other more-detailed versions, but the language is more stark and the report attempts to paint a bigger picture of the problem caused by the burning of fossil fuels, such as coal, oil and gas. (AP Photo/Matt York, File)

Global warming is here, human-caused and probably already dangerous—and it's increasingly likely that the heating trend could be

irreversible, a draft of a new international science report says.

The United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change on Monday sent governments a final draft of its synthesis report, which combines three earlier, gigantic documents by the Nobel Prize-winning group. There is little in the report that wasn't in the other more-detailed versions, but the language is more stark and the report attempts to connect the different scientific disciplines studying problems caused by the burning of fossil fuels, such as coal, oil and gas.

The 127-page draft, obtained by The Associated Press, paints a harsh warning of what's causing global warming and what it will do to humans and the environment. It also describes what can be done about it.

"Continued emission of greenhouse gases will cause further warming and long-lasting changes in all components of the climate system, increasing the likelihood of severe, pervasive and irreversible impacts for people and ecosystems," the report says. The final report will be issued after governments and scientists go over the draft line by line in an October conference in Copenhagen.

Depending on circumstances and values, "currently observed impacts might already be considered dangerous," the report says. It mentions extreme weather and rising sea levels, such as heat waves, flooding and droughts. It even raises, as an earlier report did, the idea that climate change will worsen violent conflicts and refugee problems and could hinder efforts to grow more food. And ocean acidification, which comes from the added carbon absorbed by oceans, will harm marine life, it says.

Without changes in greenhouse gas emissions, "climate change risks are likely to be high or very high by the end of the 21st century," the report says.

In 2009, countries across the globe set a goal of limiting global warming to about another 2 degrees Fahrenheit (-16.67 Celsius) above current levels. But the report says that it is looking more likely that the world will shoot past that point. Limiting warming to that much is possible but would require dramatic and immediate cuts in carbon dioxide pollution.

The report says if the world continues to spew greenhouse gases at its accelerating rate, it's likely that by mid-century temperatures will increase by about another 3.6 degrees Fahrenheit (2 degrees Celsius) compared to temperatures from 1986 to 2005. And by the end of the century, that scenario will bring temperatures that are about 6.7 degrees warmer (3.7 degrees Celsius).

More information: Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change:
www.ipcc.ch/

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Citation: UN panel: Global warming human-caused, dangerous (Update) (2014, August 26) retrieved 13 March 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2014-08-panel-global-human-caused-dangerous.html>

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