

Too hot for humans? Scientist discusses scary Persian Gulf forecast

November 23 2015, by Jane Kelly



The Burj al-Arab hotel in Dubai at sunset. If a new study is accurate, guests may not be able to venture outside by the end of the century.

A new study is predicting the Persian Gulf may become too hot for human survival by the century's end, and a University of Virginia climate

change expert said temperatures will rise to dangerous levels unless dramatic action is taken.

The study, conducted by experts at Loyola Marymount University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and published in the journal *Nature Climate Change*, said the Arab region could experience deadly heat waves capable of killing people.

"At this point, given what we project for the future, it looks like we will see between 2 and 4 degrees Celsius of warming by the end of the century, and that would translate in many parts of the world to much higher degrees of warming and very intense heat," Deborah Lawrence, a professor of environmental sciences, said.

Those predicted average temperatures are for the entire globe; some areas will experience much hotter weather, she said.

The dire prediction for the oil-rich Persian Gulf comes ahead of important, multinational [climate change](#) talks to be held in Paris later this month. This will be the 21st United Nations meeting on climate change; countries have struggled to reach consensus on a solution to [global warming](#).

Lawrence said the new study may prod Persian Gulf nations to "get really serious" about the negotiations. "I think when you start seeing your own region affected, you end up having a different response to looking for solutions to live in a low-carbon world."

The study's conclusions are not quite apocalyptic, but they are scary. "I read this study to say, 'There will be periods of time when people can't work outside,'" Lawrence said. "That's actually kind of rosy. The scarier scenario is that we can never live outside in the Persian Gulf, or we can never work outside because our bodies would not function well."

The world is already experiencing terrible heat waves and those will increase in frequency, she said.

"People die in heat waves," she said. "It's not just that we can't have our way of life, but we will have a public health hazard in terms of people getting through these [heat waves](#)."

Lawrence said the world can no longer avoid warming. "The question is 'How much?'"

Still, she said these projected deadly temperature hikes are not inevitable.

"We still have one to two decades before we have gone down a path and cannot turn back," she said.

A new stance taken by the United States and China is encouraging, Lawrence said. In September, during a Chinese state visit to Washington, president Obama and Xi Jinping issued an ambitious joint commitment to curb emissions. The move by the world's top two economies and polluters is aimed at encouraging the rest of the world to make firm commitments at the Paris talks. The goal is to ensure global warming does not exceed 2 degrees Celsius over pre-industrial levels after 2020.

Talks begin Nov. 30 in Paris and are scheduled to end Dec. 11.

Provided by University of Virginia

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