

UN report: Increased warming closing in on agreed upon limit

September 9 2020, by Seth Borenstein



In this Saturday, Sept. 5, 2020 file photo, an air tanker drops fire retardant on a hillside wildfire in Yucaipa, Calif. A hotter world is getting closer to passing a temperature limit set by global leaders five years ago and may exceed it in the next decade or so, according to a new United Nations report released on Wednesday, Sept. 9, 2020. (AP Photo/Ringo H.W. Chiu)

The world is getting closer to passing a temperature limit set by global leaders five years ago and may exceed it in the next decade or so, according to a new United Nations report.

In the next five years, the world has nearly a 1-in-4 chance of experiencing a year that's hot enough to put the global temperature at [2.7 degrees](#) (1.5 degrees Celsius) above pre-industrial times, according to a new science 130 degrees (54.4 degrees Celsius) and Siberia hit 100 degrees (38 degrees Celsius).

The warming that has already occurred has "increased the odds of extreme events that are unprecedented in our historical experience," Stanford University climate scientist Noah Diffenbaugh said.

For example, historical global warming has increased the odds of record-setting hot extremes at more than 80% of the globe, and has "doubled or even tripled the odds over the region of California and the western U.S. that has experienced record-setting heat in recent weeks," Diffenbaugh added.

The world already has warmed nearly 2 degrees (1.1 degrees Celsius) since the late 1800s, and the last five years are hotter than the previous five years, the report said. The speed-up could be temporary, or it might not be. There's both man-made warming and natural warming from a strong El Nino weather pattern in the past five years, said World Meteorological Organization Secretary-General Petteri Taalas.



In this Thursday, Sept. 26, 2019 file photo, Marco Belfrond holds an old photo of the Plancipieux glacier, near Courmayeur, northern Italy, near the fast-moving melting glacier. A hotter world is getting closer to passing a temperature limit set by global leaders five years ago and may exceed it in the next decade or so, according to a new United Nations report released on Wednesday, Sept. 9, 2020. (AP Photo/Antonio Calanni)

"The probability of 1.5 degrees (Celsius) is growing year by year," Taalas told The Associated Press. "It's very likely to happen in the [next decade](#) if we don't change our behavior."

That's potentially faster than what a 2018 U.N. report found: that the world was likely to hit 1.5 degrees sometime between 2030 and 2052.

Breakthrough Institute climate scientist Zeke Hausfather, who wasn't

part of the new report, said the document was a good update of what scientists already know. It is "abundantly clear that rapid climate change is continuing and the world is far from on track" toward meeting the Paris climate goals, he said.

Some countries, including the U.S. and many in Europe, are reducing emissions of heat-trapping carbon dioxide, but Taalas said the world is on a path that will be 5.4 degrees (3 degrees Celsius) warmer compared with the late 19th century. That would be above the Paris accord's less stringent 2-degree Celsius target.



In this Thursday, Aug. 27, 2020 file photo, people survey the damage left in the wake of Hurricane Laura in Holly Beach, La. A hotter world is getting closer to passing a temperature limit set by global leaders five years ago and may exceed it in the next decade or so, according to a new United Nations report released on

Wednesday, Sept. 9, 2020. (AP Photo/Eric Gay)

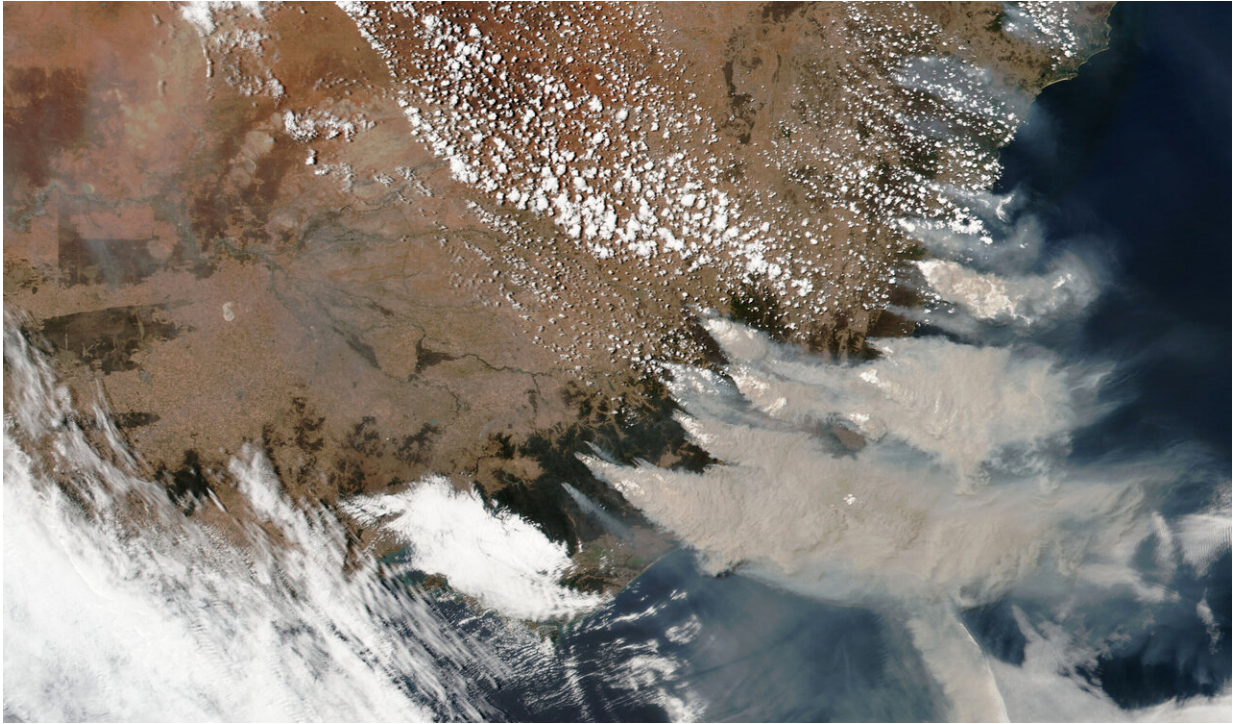
The latest report was the U.N.'s annual update on "climate disruption" caused by the burning of coal, oil and gas. It highlighted more than just increasing temperatures and rising sea levels.

"Record heat, ice loss, wildfires, floods and droughts continue to worsen, affecting communities, nations and economies around the world," United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres wrote in a foreword.

Guterres said big polluting countries, like China, the United States and India, need to become carbon neutral, adding no heat-trapping gas to the atmosphere, by 2050.

If they don't, "all the effort will not be enough," Guterres said at a press conference Wednesday.

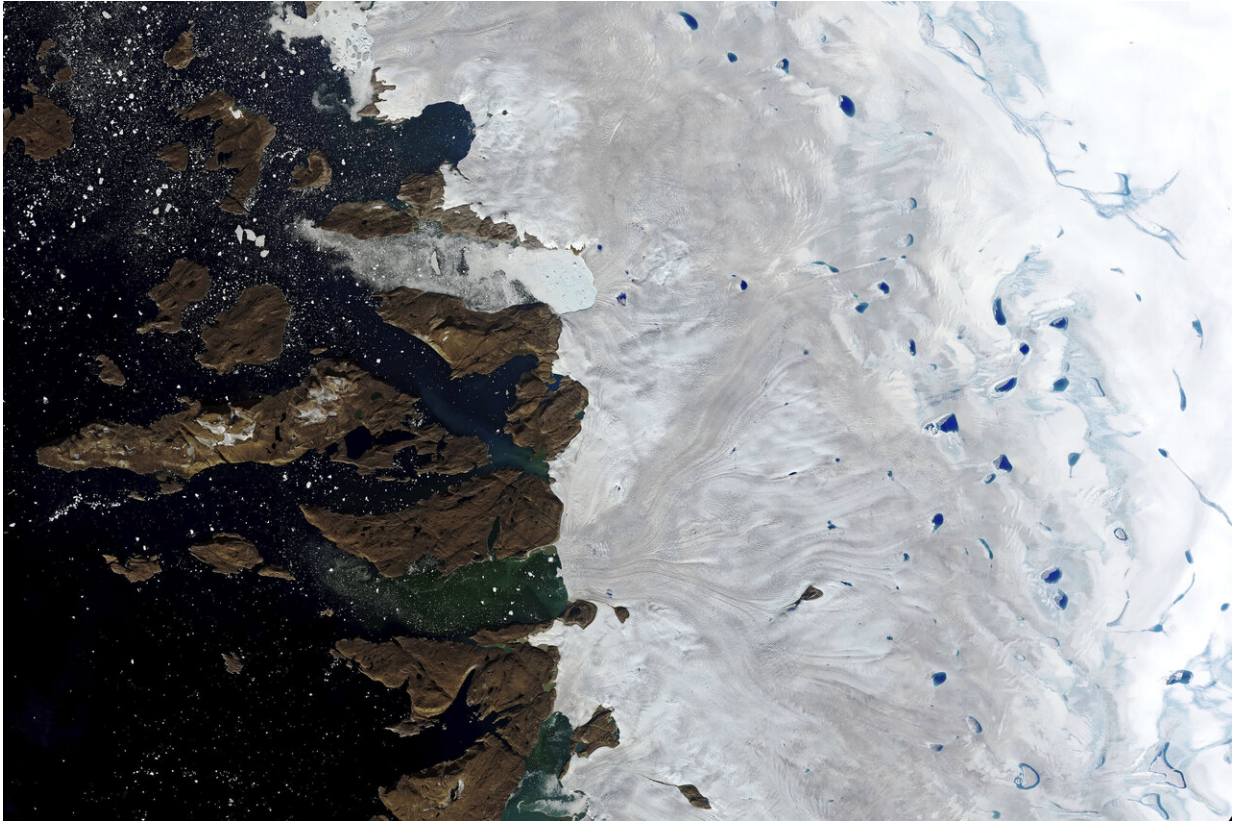
The report spotlights unprecedented wildfires in the Amazon, the Arctic and Australia. California is fighting record wildfires as the report was issued.



This satellite image provided by NASA on Saturday, Jan. 4, 2020 shows smoke from wildfires in Victoria and New South Wales, Australia. A hotter world is getting closer to passing a temperature limit set by global leaders five years ago and may exceed it in the next decade or so, according to a new United Nations report released on Wednesday, Sept. 9, 2020. (NASA via AP)



In this Monday, April 27, 2020 file photo, dry river banks of Germany's most important river, the Rhine, lie exposed in front of the Cologne Cathedral in Cologne, Germany. This April was one of the driest months since records began and creates problems not only for farmers but also for industry. (AP Photo/Martin Meissner)



This Monday, July 30, 2019 natural-color image made with the Operational Land Imager (OLI) on the Landsat 8 satellite shows meltwater collecting on the surface of the ice sheet in northwest Greenland near the sheet's edge. A hotter world is getting closer to passing a temperature limit set by global leaders five years ago and may exceed it in the next decade or so, according to a new United Nations report released on Wednesday, Sept. 9, 2020. (NASA via AP)

"Drought and heat waves substantially increased the risk of wildfires," the report said. "The three largest economic losses on record from wildfires have all occurred in the last four years."

Taalas said the these type of climate disasters will continue at least through the 2060s because of the heat-trapping gases already in the air.

Carbon dioxide emissions will be down 4% to 7% this year because of reduced travel and industrial activities during the coronavirus pandemic, but the heat-trapping gas stays in the air for a century so the levels in the atmosphere continue to go up, Taalas said. And, he said, so will the warming.

So far, this year is the second hottest on record and has a [37% chance of surpassing](#) the global record set in 2016, according to the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

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