

Report says that global warming-enhanced El Niño will result in nearly half a million excess deaths by February

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A newly released research report prepared by the University of Chicago-based Climate Impact Lab projects that between last June and February of next year there could be as many as 451,000 excess heat-related deaths worldwide compared to the average over the last three decades. The report attributes this dramatic increase due to the current super El Niño which is amplifying the already increased global temperatures caused by human-induced global warming. The effects may linger into next summer after the El Niño is projected to have run its course, based on past experience. Meanwhile, the upward trend of global temperatures will continue.

The study is based on seasonal temperature forecasts using past data and projections on how raised temperatures are likely to affect mortality rates in more than 24,000 regions worldwide.

The Climate Impact Lab projects that average global land temperatures during this El Niño could be higher by about 1.2 degrees C (2.2 degrees F), resulting in 44 percent more extremely hot days than in a year without El Niño.

The greatest impact is expected in poorer countries, concentrated in the lower latitudes, just north and south of the Equator, which are already hot and burdened by food insecurity and high energy costs, partly due to climate change and the consequences of the war in Iran.

For example, the Sahel region in Africa is expected to be the hardest hit, with about 66,800 additional deaths caused by El Niño-driven heat. Other especially affected regions include South and Southeast Asia and parts of Latin America.

Other areas of the world although not as severely impacted will nevertheless take a significant hit. For

example, the United States is expected to suffer 3,500 excess deaths and Italy 780.

The study recommends a number of mitigative measures that should be implemented immediately in order to reduce the anticipated impact. These include heat-warning systems, cooling centers, hydration stations, protections for outdoor workers, expanded hospital capacity and targeted outreach to elderly people and other vulnerable groups. Given that capitalist ruling classes all over the world have done pitifully little to stem global warming and are focused instead on preparations for war and dictatorship, such pleas will fall on deaf ears.

Indeed, the Trump administration is doing everything it can to reverse the already meager measures taken in the US to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. One recent example is the proposed rollback of fuel efficiency standards for new cars. Another is encouraging the continued use of coal-fired electricity-generating stations, which were otherwise scheduled to be decommissioned. As a result of these policies, the rate of global warming will likely accelerate even more.

The study also provides an ominous warning about the future. Based on the current trajectory of increasing global warming, the currently projected additional heating due to the boost given by El Niño will become the norm in 20 years. If so, the estimated death toll under the current El Niño is only a foretaste of the hell in store for the world's population, unless drastic measures are undertaken.

The extreme urgency of the need to bring down the emission of greenhouse gasses as soon as possible is reinforced by another recent study, "Persistence of inequality in regional warming patterns under net-zero

and overshoot pathways.” The Melbourne, Australia-based research, published in *Environmental Research Letters*, echoes the finding that the geographically unequal distribution of the impacts of El Nino also will mean a slower recovery in the event greenhouse gases are reduced. It concludes that even under the most favorable scenario,

The inequality seen in the pattern of present-day warming, where warming relative to background variability is higher in poorer tropical areas than in present-day wealthier high-latitude locations, will not reverse under net-zero emissions pathways and may take many decades to begin to reverse under net-negative emissions.

The world operates as a globally integrated economy. Improving living conditions in one portion of the planet cannot be unaffected while another major portion continues suffering the devastating consequences of extreme global warming. Mass migrations of desperate people from the hotter areas and populated coastal areas subject to inundation due to sea level rise, will make current population movements pale in comparison. It is estimated that up to 1.2 billion people could be displaced by 2050.

One of the effects of global warming on human health includes its impact on reproduction. At a recent conference on the Pacific island of Fiji, the U.N. climate chief, Simon Stiell, warned, “Climate-driven extreme heat during pregnancy is increasingly linked to premature birth, stillbirth, low birth weight, and maternal complications.” The basis for this assessment is a new survey showing more than two-thirds of health professionals across five continents have seen complications caused by intense heat in the past five years.

As the planet warms, the frequency and duration of heat waves increases. A study newly published in *Nature* finds, based on data from the years 1979 to 2023, “Globally, heatwave onset advanced by 3.29 ± 0.12 days per decade, ending was delayed by 5.41 ± 0.12 days per decade and the heatwave season lengthened by 8.71 ± 0.17 days per decade.”

Heatwaves occurred sooner and lasted longer than was previously the case. Also, “Drylands experienced more pronounced timing shifts than humid regions.”

CO2 has been added to the atmosphere since the Industrial Revolution. The cumulative amount determines the total warming. Unlike some pollutants that wash out of the air quickly, a significant portion of CO2 remains in the atmosphere for centuries or even millennia.

This long atmospheric lifetime means that the warming effects of today’s emissions will persist for many generations to come. Long-term consequences include rising sea levels due to melting ice sheets, changes in global weather patterns and the continued acidification of the world’s oceans.

The failure to curtail and ultimately achieve net-zero emission of CO2 and other greenhouse gases as soon as possible prolongs the period of atmospheric warming and the intensity of its devastating effects.

The insane drive toward the maximization of profit no matter the consequences, which is the fundamental engine driving the capitalist system, is driving the accelerating pace of catastrophic global warming. Bitter experience has shown that reasoned appeals to the “better nature” of the capitalist class is futile. Only united, worldwide action by the working class to establish a global socialist society which puts people’s needs over private profit can avert disaster.



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