BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

6 Minute English

How is climate change affecting extreme weather?

This is not a word-for-word transcript.

Phil
Hello, this is 6 Minute English from BBC Learning English. I'm Phil. It seems that we're hearing about more and more terrible weather, but how exactly is climate change affecting extreme weather? I'm lucky today to be joined by BBC Weather forecaster, meteorologist and presenter, Sarah Keith-Lucas. Hi Sarah.

Sarah Keith-Lucas
Hi Phil. It's great to be here.

Phil
Sarah's here to help us understand what's happening with extreme weather. She'll also help explain some of the words and expressions used in a new series of BBC Learning English videos all about weather and climate and the language we use to talk about them. You can find the link to them on our webpage, or in the show notes for this podcast. Sarah, let's start with a really important question: what's the difference between climate and weather?

Sarah Keith-Lucas
That's a great question, Phil. The weather is what you see and feel every day. Climate is more long-term. Today I'll explain how a change in the climate over the long term can be seen in the weather.

Phil
As always, we will also be learning some key vocabulary to talk about the topic. And, Sarah, it's traditional for us to set a quiz question. Have you got one for us?

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Sarah Keith-Lucas
Yes, I have! By how much has Earth's temperature increased since 1970. Is it?

a) Around 0.5C
b) Around 1C
c) Around 2C

Phil
I don't know, about 2 degrees?

Sarah Keith-Lucas
I'll give the answer at the end of the programme, so listen to the end to find out.

Phil
Now, we're going to talk about tropical storms. What do we mean by 'tropical storms', Sarah?

Sarah
Well, those are hurricanes, cyclones and typhoons. They're large rotating storm systems formed over warm tropical waters. These are actually the same, we just use different names depending on where in the world they form. Hurricanes are found in the Atlantic, Cyclones in the Indian Ocean and Typhoons in the West Pacific. As the world warms, climate scientists think that these storms will get more destructive.

Phil
In one of our new Learning English for weather videos, meteorologist Darren Bett tells us about another worrying change.

Darren Bett
Scientists also think storms are slowing down. They're not moving across as quickly, and that means if a storm is in the same area for longer, the winds will be stronger for longer, and the rain will last for longer producing more flooding and more **likelihood** of flooding and **landslides** and also **mudslides**.

Phil
Darren said that if a storm moves more slowly, there will be more **likelihood** of flooding. **Likelihood** is the noun that we use to say how probable, or how likely something is to happen. Darren also told us about **landslides** and **mudslides**.

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Sarah Keith-Lucas
Yes, **landslides** are where a large amount of earth or rock moves down a slope quickly. **Mudslides** tend to be faster and more liquid. Both of these things can happen after particularly heavy rain and can cause damage to buildings. People can also be killed or injured by them.

Phil
What else causes loss of life in a hurricane, typhoon or cyclone?

Sarah Keith-Lucas
Well, something else that is very dangerous is a storm surge. Let's hear again from my colleague Darren Bett.

Darren Bett
Storm surge, that's that body of water that gets **swept** inland and produces widespread flooding. Climate change is warming our seas, and the sea levels are rising. That potentially could mean that a storm surge which is one element of a storm that produces more **casualties** than any other, those storm surges could become even more dangerous.

Phil
So, we had the word **casualty**, and this is used to talk about people killed or injured by an accident, a military attack, or in this case an extreme weather event.

Sarah Keith-Lucas
Darren talked about **storm surges**. A storm surge is where the sea level rises quickly pushed by the strong winds caused by a storm. This water comes onto land with an enormous amount lot of force, and storm surges can be up to 10 metres high. Buildings get destroyed, people can drown.

Phil
We heard about the storm **sweeping** inland. Something sweeping in is moving quickly and powerfully. And you can hear more from Darren in the videos on our website. Sarah, how about the answer to the quiz question you asked earlier?

Sarah Keith-Lucas
OK, Phil. So, I asked by how much has the world's average temperature increased since 1970.

Phil
And I thought that it was around two celsius.

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Sarah Keith-Lucas
It's actually around one degree celsius. 1C is just an average across all of earth's land and ocean surface. Some places are warming much quicker than this such as the Arctic that's warming 3 times faster than the average rate. Just a small increase in average temperature can lead to a much bigger increase in extreme events such as heatwaves, wildfires and floods.

Phil
Oh wow, so that is an important difference. OK, let's recap the vocabulary we've learned, starting with **likelihood**, which is noun that we use to talk how probable or how likely something is to happen.

Sarah Keith-Lucas
Landslides and **mudslides** which can occur after heavy rainfall make earth or mud move downhill very fast.

Phil
A **storm surge** is a sudden rise in the sea level, that can move inland causing destruction.

Sarah Keith-Lucas
If something sweeps in, it moves in very fast and very powerfully.

Phil
And finally, a **casualty** is someone who is injured or killed by an accident, attack, or something like an extreme weather event. Once again, our six minutes are up.

Sarah Keith-Lucas
Goodbye!

Phil
Thank for joining us today, Sarah! Bye!

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VOCABULARY

likelihood
how probable something is to happen

landslide
Where earth, rocks, etc move quickly downhill

mudslide
A type of landslide where liquid mud moves quickly downhill

storm surge
a sudden rise in sea level that moves inland

sweep in
move in quickly and powerfully

casualty
someone killed or injured in an accident, attack or incident

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