

## **The Threat Multiplier**

Psychological Distance is the term that refers to the human tendency to ignore certain threats that are distant from us in time, physical distance, or social relevance. Since climate change is measured as global temperature, and is caused by gases that we cannot see or feel, it can be an abstract concept for people. The planet has warmed nearly 2 degrees Fahrenheit in the last 150 years which is over 10 times faster than the earth warmed as it emerged from the last ice age. Perspective can shift when we recognize how climate change is affecting us locally.

Climate change is super-sizing weather events making them stronger, longer, and more damaging than 2 or 3 decades ago. It is most notable on coastlines - sea levels are rising - 25 centimeters since 1880, and 700 million people live along coastlines. Many of the world's megacities are on coasts. The arctic is warming. In Alaska, the ground is shifting, foundations are cracking, and pipelines are breaking due to the thawing permafrost. The poles are warming twice as fast as the global average. Snow is melting on mountain peaks and is not being replaced; a threat to the water supply. The urban heat island effect is due to more heat-trapping emissions in cities and more concrete, asphalt, and air pollution which leads to negative outcomes which include tempers flaring in extreme heat, aggression, and crime spikes. Chicago is implementing solutions like green roofs, planting trees and using reflective surfaces to cool typical "hot spots".

Climate change isn't a future issue. It is here and now. There is no time to waste. Hayhoe compares carbon emissions to cigarettes. Calculating carbon emission amounts to temperature rise is like trying to determine how many cigarettes one can smoke before getting lung cancer. The bottom line is: the sooner we stop, the better. The more carbon humans produce, the faster climate changes--a greater danger to us. We have three choices for dealing with climate change: reduce heat trapping gas emissions, build resilient infrastructure and prepare to adapt to the changes, or suffer. Warming matters, every choice matters; disaster isn't inevitable with good choices. We need to reduce heat-trapping emissions - take in the troubling information with understanding and learn the differences we can make. We should accelerate clean energy climate solutions which ultimately are health solutions. "There is no Planet B". Smart societal choices can reduce the severity of climate change.

Climate change exacerbates conflicts and refugee crises. The lack of basic needs becomes life threatening. Many aid agencies are developing strategies that help these

situations. Maintaining our mental health is important as “eco-anxiety” presents itself as extreme worry, feelings of anxiety, panic, fear, and hopelessness. Acknowledging these feelings is the first step to action. Young people report that their anxiety led them to look for communities to participate in climate action, Greta Thunberg being one of the most famous.

In conclusion, climate change is a science issue, a health issue, a food issue, a water issue, a poverty issue, and a justice issue, therefore making it a **human** issue. Together we can face the challenge and bring hope.