

The World at Three Degrees



A soft tropical breeze can feel nice on a warm, sunny day. In fact, many people dream of lying on a sandy beach and listening to waves crash in the ocean.

However, no one dreams of the rushing winds of a tornado or the roaring waters of a flood. We often think about gentle rains, but what about unending downpours and flooding?

Today, we have the comforts of nice weather many days out of the year. Science tells us, though, that if the world were to heat up a mere three degrees Celsius, we would have something to worry about. If the earth's temperatures got hotter permanently, we would have big problems.

It is important to keep our planet healthy. We should do everything we can to keep earth safe.

Hurricanes

A hurricane is a major storm system that develops over the ocean. As it moves across the water, it can build strength. This means it could cause major damage if it reaches land. Hurricanes don't always hit land, but if the temperature of earth were to permanently rise, more hurricanes could develop.

The World at Three Degrees

Flooding

Polar ice caps help keep the earth's climate in balance. However, if the world were to get hotter, the ice caps could melt too quickly. This would mean more water filling the ocean beds. Over time, this melting could cause the sea levels to rise and cause flooding along coastal towns and along rivers and lakes.

Drought

While hotter weather could make some parts of the planet have major rainstorms and flooding, other parts of the world could become drier. If the heat were to disrupt normal weather patterns, the natural balance of the water cycle could shift. This means places that normally experience plenty of rain might receive less of it. Droughts mean drier grounds, insufficient drinking water, and poor conditions for growing food.

Pollution

Air pollution is another danger of the world heating up. Imagine if instead of fog on a chilly morning, the misty film filling the air was made up of polluted air. This pollution could make it hard to breathe. It could mean less fresh air and a poorer quality of life.

When normal weather patterns change, the air doesn't get cleaned by rain on a regular basis. Heat rises, and this makes the air stagnant. This is how air pollution can get worse.

The World at Three Degrees

If these possibilities sound pretty bad, just remember there is something we can do about them! We can do our part to keep our planet healthy. We can reduce our waste, use less gasoline and coal, and recycle common materials like plastic, paper, and glass. If we work together, we can help keep our planet comfortable!

The World at Three Degrees

- 1) Read the text to compare and contrast hurricanes, flooding, and drought. Check the boxes appropriately.

	Hurricane	Flooding	Drought
This means drier grounds and poor conditions for growing food.			
It develops over the ocean.			
It starts with more water filling the ocean beds.			
It doesn't always hit land.			
Large amounts of water cover coastal towns, rivers, and lakes.			
It is caused by extremely hot weather.			
Places start receiving less rain.			

- 2) How does air pollution get worse?

The World at Three Degrees

3) How can we keep our planet healthy?

4) _____ could mean less fresh air and a poorer quality of life.

- a) Drought
- b) Hurricane
- c) Pollution

5) According to the paragraph on flooding, what helps keep the earth's climate in balance?
