
UN warns of 80% chance to exceed 1.5°C temperature threshold by 2028

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Humanity faces an 80% likelihood that Earth's temperatures will temporarily exceed the critical 1.5-degree Celsius threshold within the next five years, the UN reported on Wednesday.

The 2015 Paris Climate Accords aimed to limit long-term global temperature increases to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. However, the UN's World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) stated this target referred to sustained increases over decades, not short-term spikes.

The WMO's report coincided with findings from the EU's Copernicus Climate Change Service, which revealed last month as the hottest May on record, highlighting human-induced climate change. UN chief Antonio Guterres compared humanity's impact on the planet to "the meteor that wiped out the dinosaurs."

Since 2015, the chance of temporarily exceeding the 1.5°C limit has surged from nearly zero to 80%. In 2023, this risk was estimated at 66%.

Significant climate shifts are already triggering extreme weather events, flooding, droughts, glacial melt, and rising sea levels. “We are on a record-breaking warming path,” WMO deputy chief Ko Barrett stated, emphasizing that temporary breaches do not signify a permanent failure to meet the 1.5°C goal, but the trend remains alarming.

Temperature levels are rising, with 2023 the hottest year on record, and predictions indicating 2024 could be even hotter. The WMO forecasts the average near-surface temperature from 2024 to 2028 will be 1.1–1.9°C above pre-industrial levels.

Pointing to repeated temperature records, the WMO noted an 86% chance that one year between 2024 and 2028 will surpass 2023 as the hottest year, and a 90% chance that this period will be warmer than the previous five years.

“We are way off track to meet the goals set in the Paris Agreement,” Barrett warned.