

Let's Schmooze

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That Climatic Trigger is Knocking at Our Door!

It's starting ~ the climatic trigger is being set. Even now, unseasonably warm temperatures at the North Pole are pushing the much colder polar vortex southward into North America and Siberia. When you think of it, this is really not that unexpected. Sooner or later, we anticipated that unusual cold would drift downward from the northern pole into the more temperate zone to the south.

Let's review a bit. As far as worldwide climates and global warming go, one of the most important contributors to widespread weather patterns is the phenomenon known as thermohaline circulation. Perhaps, the best known and most talked about example is the Gulf Stream in the North Atlantic. About 60 miles wide and about 3,000 feet deep, it quietly but steadily transports huge amounts of warm water from the sunny tropical Caribbean Sea upwards toward the bitter cold North Pole. In the process, it gently but persistently warms the land masses around the North Atlantic. It's a very dependable climate modifier when it's circulating properly, and it flows continuously at a rate of roughly five to six miles per hour.

However, increasingly massive amounts of cold water ~ generated from accelerating ice melt in the North Pole and Greenland areas ~ are flowing southward into the North Atlantic Ocean, and pushing back against the Gulf Stream flowing north. This is slowing thermohaline circulation speeds down to rates not seen in more than a millennium. If and when the Gulf Stream does stop circulating ~ that's when the widely-feared climatic "trigger" is supposed to happen.

We will ~ all of a sudden ~ experience rapid climatic cooling ~ probably far more rapidly than the climatic warming that we are experiencing now. It will go from hot to cold as if a switch had been flipped.

A similar phenomenon is happening in the southern oceans around the Antarctic continent. Glaciers and ice sheets are suddenly melting so fast that it is as if someone has all of a sudden figuratively flipped a switch from hot to cold. Massive amounts of ice cold waters are being flushed into the southern oceans, cooling those waters down.

This wouldn't be the first time that Earth has suddenly chilled. It's happened before ~ with the Younger Dryas event about 13,000 years ago ~ and the 8.2 ka event about 8,200 years ago. The most recent Little Ice Age occurred between the fourteenth and nineteenth centuries ~ just a few hundred years ago. During that time, western Europeans experienced deeper and longer-lasting cold weather, crop failures and famines, increased warfare over dwindling resources, and a pronounced rise in mortality rates.

It can happen again ~ very possibly in our own lifetimes. The melt rate of the massive ice pack sitting on top of Greenland is accelerating at alarming rates.

Personally, we feel that a sudden climatic shift toward cooling just might be a blessing in disguise. After all, a sudden climatic trigger toward cooling may be what it takes to check the runaway climate warming that we are experiencing now. Left unchecked, climate warming will inexorably destroy us. A climatic trigger in a cooler direction may be what actually and ultimately saves us from getting way, way too hot for our own good.

That climatic trigger is activating. Better get ready to bundle up!

~ 'til we meet again ~