



Abrupt Climate Change: Inevitable Surprises

National Research Council, Division on Earth and Life Studies, Board on Atmospheric Sciences and Climate, Polar Research Board, Ocean Studies Board, Committee on Abrupt Climate Change

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The climate record for the past 100,000 years clearly indicates that the climate system has undergone periodic--and often extreme--shifts, sometimes in as little as a decade or less. The causes of abrupt climate changes have not been clearly established, but the triggering of events is likely to be the result of multiple natural processes.

Abrupt climate changes of the magnitude seen in the past would have far-reaching implications for human society and ecosystems, including major impacts on energy consumption and water supply demands. Could such a change happen again? Are human activities exacerbating the likelihood of abrupt climate change? What are the potential societal consequences of such a change?

Abrupt Climate Change: Inevitable Surprises looks at the current scientific evidence and theoretical understanding to describe what is currently known about abrupt climate change, including patterns and magnitudes, mechanisms, and probability of occurrence. It identifies critical knowledge gaps concerning the potential for future abrupt changes, including those aspects of change most important to society and economies, and outlines a research strategy to close those gaps.

Based on the best and most current research available, this book surveys the history of climate change and makes a series of specific recommendations for the future.



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