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What Happens to the Oceans as Earth Gets Warmer?



Our oceans cover more than 70% of the Earth. They are home to amazing animals like whales, sea turtles, and colorful fish. But did you know the oceans are also being affected by climate change? As Earth gets warmer, so do the oceans—and this causes big changes.

One major change is that ocean water is getting warmer. The heat comes from greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, like carbon dioxide, trapping more of the sun's energy. Warmer oceans can lead to stronger storms, such as hurricanes, because warm water gives these storms extra power.

Warmer water also makes it harder for some sea creatures to survive. Coral reefs, which are like underwater cities for fish, are very sensitive to temperature. When the water gets too warm, corals turn white in a process called bleaching. If the water stays too hot for too long, the corals can die.

Another problem is that the ice is melting in places like the Arctic. When ice from glaciers and ice sheets melts, it adds more water to the oceans. This causes sea levels to rise. Higher sea levels can flood coastal areas where people live and damage homes, roads, and wildlife habitats.

Warming oceans also change the way sea animals live. Some fish move to cooler waters, which can affect the food chain. Animals that depend on those fish may go hungry or have to move too.

Lastly, oceans are absorbing carbon dioxide from the air. That might sound helpful, but it can make the water more acidic. This hurts animals with shells, like clams and crabs, and even tiny plankton that many sea creatures eat.

The good news is that people are working to protect the oceans. Using clean energy, driving less, and planting trees can help slow down global warming. Every little change adds up.

The oceans are a big part of life on Earth. If we take care of them, they will continue to take care of us.