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Greenland ice swells ocean rise

By Paul Rincon

BBC News science reporter, St Louis



Greenland's glaciers are sliding towards the sea much faster than previously believed, scientists have told a conference in St Louis, US.

It was thought the entire Greenland ice sheet could melt in about 1,000 years, but the latest evidence suggests that could happen much sooner.

It implies that sea levels will rise much faster as well.

Details of the study, by Nasa and University of Kansas researchers, are also reported in the journal *Science*.

The comprehensive analysis found that the amount of ice dumped into the Atlantic Ocean has doubled in the last five years.

If the Greenland ice sheet melted completely, it would raise global sea levels by about 7m.

"It takes a long time to build and melt an ice sheet, but glaciers can react quickly to temperature changes," said co-author Eric Rignot, from the US space agency's (Nasa) Jet Propulsion Laboratory in California.

Rising surface air-temperatures seem to be behind the increases in glacier speed in the southern half of Greenland since 1996; but the northward spread of warmer temperatures may be responsible for a rapid increase in glacier speed further north after 2000.

Dr Rignot and colleagues described their results at the annual meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

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