Study: Antarctica melts if all fossil fuels burn

By Justin Gillis, New York Times

Burning all the world's deposits of coal, oil and natural gas would raise the temperature enough to melt the entire ice sheet covering Antarctica, driving the level of the sea up by more than 160 feet, scientists reported Friday.

In a major surprise to the scientists, they found that half the melting could occur in as little as a thousand years, causing the ocean to rise by something on the order of a foot per decade, roughly 10 times the rate at which it is rising now. Such a pace would almost certainly throw human society into chaos, forcing a rapid retreat from the world's coastal cities.

The rest of the earth's land ice would melt along with Antarctica, and warming ocean waters would expand, so that the total rise of the sea would likely exceed 200 feet, the scientists said.

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