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BURN: Rising Seas

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Neal Conan in Greenland
(Gretel Ehrlich)



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Sea level rise is just one of the ugly faces of climate change. A dangerous one too. Especially for the US, which has 20 of the most threatened coastal

cities in the world. With reports and interviews from the beaches of Southern Florida, the glacier fields of Greenland, the coastal wetlands of Louisiana and the streets of New York City, *Rising Seas* takes an in-depth look at the potentially devastating impact of sea-level rise on two major American cities in addition to the Gulf Coast's vulnerable marshlands and its oil and gas industry. The special also captures the sights and sounds of Greenland's ice sheets, which are melting more rapidly than anyone had anticipated, unleashing huge quantities of water into the North Atlantic. That, in turn, is driving the unusually fast sea rise along the coast.

Greenland

Greenland ice sheets are rapidly melting. Eventually, water will seek its own level and stabilize roughly the same everywhere. But the immediate problem has huge quantities of fresh water pouring off Greenland's west coast. That flood first washes down the east coast of Canada and the U.S., driving an unusually fast sea rise in these places. *BURN* sends Greenland explorer Gretel Ehrlich, author of *The Future of Ice*, and journalist Neal Conan to meet with leading researchers, among them, the head of the Geological Survey of Greenland. Ehrlich and Conan fly above Greenland to get a bird's-eye view of the ice melt, and they approach by sea the collapsing shoulders of Greenland's glaciers to better understand the enormous challenges we all face living on a warming planet.

Miami

While all coastal cities face real trouble, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development — in its assessment of threats to 50 major cities worldwide — says Miami is the most vulnerable. Parts of Miami will be permanently flooded in as few as 15 years from now. And because the

substrate for South Florida is porous limestone, there is basically no defense. Host Alex Chadwick tells the story of Miami's impending struggle for survival through two local scientists who are deeply involved with questions of how and when sea-level rise will begin to engulf Miami — a process already underway. Studies estimate total property vulnerability in the Miami area at around \$400 billion.

New York

Hurricane Sandy was the shot across the bow for New York City. But what if “the storm of the century” hits New York more frequently, as some climate scientists have suggested? Some believe NYC should follow the lead of Amsterdam and other European cities, which have decided that resiliency isn't enough; they should instead protect themselves from encroaching tides with visionary engineering projects. Journalist Dean Olsher reports on an ambitious solution — sea gates around New York Harbor, which could potentially protect the city 400 years into the future.

Louisiana

Reporter Reid Frazier visits the lower Mississippi River in southern Louisiana, which is lined with oil refineries, petrochemical plants and storage terminals. It's an increasingly risky place to conduct business because the waters of the Gulf are rising, faster than most other places in the world. At the same time, Louisiana's wetlands — which once served as a shield against hurricanes — are sinking into the Gulf.