

Climate change hits Winter Olympic preparation

By Associated Press

AAS-FEE, Switzerland – The athletes' half-hour commute in the Swiss Alps – up two gondolas, then through a tunnel in the world's highest underground train to a glacier at 11,000 feet – served up daily grim reminders that global warming is threatening their line of work.

After exiting the train, they squelched through a field of grayish mud to reach shrinking snowfields scarred by new crevasses. Occasionally, they heard the sharp roars of glacial ice breaking off in monster chunks, then echoing across the peaks where they trained jumps, tricks and turns for the Pyeongchang Olympics. Most days, they basked in brilliant, snow-melting sunshine that bathed the whole scene in deceptive beauty.

Another subtle but telltale indicator of climate change's disruptive impact on winter sports: Many athletes – here 5,000 miles away from the Rockies and 3,500 miles from the Green Mountains of New England – had the letters "USA" emblazoned on their jackets. Americans once had little need to swap continents to guarantee offseason access to snow. But warming is forcing athletes to hunt farther from home for wintry conditions, particularly just months away from an Olympics.

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