Health Impacts of Climate Change: South Carolina

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Max Learner, Ph.D.
Office of Public Health Preparedness
South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control
Public Health Issues

• Current and potential health impacts and concerns in South Carolina
• Surveillance and assessment
• Emergency management
• Planning and public policy for adaptation and mitigation
Current and potential health impacts

• Frequency, type, severity and duration of extreme weather events
  – And subtle impacts of climate change
• Vulnerable populations
  – Intersection of chronic illness and climate change
  – Food security
• Change in type and distribution of vector-borne, food-borne and water-borne diseases
• Impacts of sea level rise
• Economics: The Dismal Science
Surveillance and assessment

- DHEC Environmental Public Health Tracking System
  - Surveillance of key indicators
  - Communication of information to the public

- http://www.scdhec.gov/administration/epht/
My Health & Environment - Environmental Public Health Tracking

Your resource for information about the health of South Carolina citizens and their environment.

View definitions, explanations and facts about each Content Area.

Create and Explore health and environmental maps, charts, trendlines, and data tables.

TRACK IT.
View tables of environmental and health data where you live, work and play.

MAP IT.
View maps and charts of environmental and health data by county in SC.

USE IT.
View suggestions to help make better choices for your health and the environment.

"If you want to learn about the health of a population, look at the air they breathe, the water they drink, and the places where they live."
- Hippocrates, the Father of Medicine, in the Fifth Century BC

Tell us how you have taken action to improve your health or the environment around you.
Click on the topic below or on the numbers in the image for more info.

1. **Advisories**
   - Swimming, Rip Tide, Shellfish, Weather, Fish...

2. **Water Quality**
   - Swimming Advisories, Run-off, Real-time and Historical Data...

3. **Weather**
   - Real-time Weather, Storm Information and Activities...

4. **Air Quality**
   - Pollen Count Index, Ozone Index, Emissions...

5. **Fishing/Shellfish**
   - Fish Advisories, Fish Watch, Tidal Creeks...

6. **Seafood**
   - Advantages of Eating Seafood, Safe Handling of Seafood...

7. **Tidal Creeks**
   - Tidal Creek, SC Estuarine and Coastal Assessment Program...

8. **Life on the Coast**
   - Advisories, SC Data, Tide Tables...

9. **Marine Life Health**
   - Dolphins, Mussel Watch, Sentinel Species Research...

10. **Litter Prevention**
    - Pet Waste, Garbage, Adopt-a-Beach, Clean Marina...

11. **Beach Preservation**
    - Protection, Erosion and Re-Nourishment...

12. **Wildlife Conservation**
    - Sea Turtles, Birds, Mammals, Jellyfish...
Emergency management

- Emergency plans for the full range of extreme weather events
- Responding to health and medical needs during and after events
- Important links with the Health Services Division of Acute Disease Epidemiology, the Environmental Division of Waste Management & Emergency Response and the Division of Emergency Medical Services
Planning and public policy

- Little public health attention is directed toward awareness of climate change issues, let alone adaptation and mitigation
- Public health and emergency management capabilities are greatly diminished due to state and federal funding cuts
- In SC, DHEC workforce has declined from 5,265 filled FTEs in 2000 to less than 3,400 filled FTEs in 2011
- Increased environmental pressures, demands for services and staff shortages for emergency response challenge the state’s ability to promote and protect the health of the public and the environment
- Political and economic climates are not conducive to effective planning and action for adapting to or mitigating climate change
What public health can do

• Raise Awareness:
  – Offer opportunities for public health and environmental staff to learn about climate change impacts on health and environment
  – Incorporate adaptation and mitigation messages into public information and programs

• Focus on the here and now:
  – Extreme weather events are teachable moments
What public health can do

• Surveillance and Assessment:
  – Daily monitoring and response to disease outbreaks, hazardous material releases, climate-related illness
  – Sustaining surveillance, epidemiology and laboratory capabilities
  – Analyzing data and identifying trends and relationships between climate, environment and health