



City and County of San Francisco
Edwin M. Lee
Mayor

San Francisco Department of Public Health

Barbara A. Garcia, MPA
Director of Health

Office of Policy and Planning

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Contact: Nancy Sarieh, (415) 554-2716, nancy.sarieh@sfdph.org

San Francisco Department of Public Health Unveils Report and Visualization Tools on Climate Health Risks of Flooding and Extreme Storms

San Francisco, CA – A new report released today by the San Francisco Department of Public Health (SFDPH), [*Climate and Health - Understanding the Risk: An Assessment of San Francisco's Vulnerability to Flooding & Extreme Storms*](#) illustrates how climate change and the resulting extreme storms, sea level rise and flooding will affect the health of San Francisco and examines how the City's most vulnerable populations will be impacted. This report is part of a larger effort within the Health Department to build resilience and prepare for the inevitable health impacts of climate change. As part of the report, a Flood Health Vulnerability Index was developed to visualize the flood health risk within the geographic extent of San Francisco.

To ensure that these health risks are well understood and to communicate information from the report, the Department has built digital communication tools using local, state and national data sets to expand community engagement opportunities. Research suggest increasingly focusing on the public health risks of climate change and reframing climate change from an environmental issue to a public health one may inspire action to overcome longstanding public indifference on the issue.

SFDPH worked with Four Twenty Seven Climate Solutions to create a set of [*interactive maps*](#) residents can use to understand the myriad of health risks based off of the Flood Health Vulnerability Index. This set of interactive maps serves as a compelling, easy-to-understand presentation for assessing flood and health risks throughout the city as well as describing how climate change will likely exacerbate existing problems with diseases and pollution, especially in communities of lower socio-economic status. Data from the Department of Public Health Flood Health Vulnerability Index can be found on the City of San Francisco's open data portal, [*DataSF*](#).

Based on current sea level rise projections in the year 2100, coupled by a 100 year storm event, San Francisco could see a 77-inch increase in water levels. The Flood Health Vulnerability Index shows the neighborhoods within San Francisco where residents are at risk of health impacts with the greatest concentration along the eastern half of the city. The neighborhoods with the highest vulnerability to the health impacts of flood inundation and extreme storms are Bayview Hunters Point, Mission Bay, SOMA, Tenderloin, Chinatown and North Beach.

"Government led reports can sometimes go overlooked due to their technical nature and are inaccessible to the general public." said Cyndy Comerford, the Director of San Francisco's Climate and Health Program and one of the authors of the report at SFDPH, "We wanted the critical information included in this report to be readily available for the community and actionable for the City's policy makers - we wanted to turn it into a story."

Health impacts associated with flooding and extreme storms include a range of infections, illnesses and injuries, which span from vector-borne disease to foodborne illnesses. Disruption to city medical services,

carbon monoxide poisoning, income loss, and mental health are also part of the negative health impact picture. A digital tool visualizing these alarming but overlooked impacts was developed using [Livestories](#), an online data platform. Information on mold exposure and respiratory illness is compiled and presented in a visually driven format for the public and for policy makers.

The San Francisco Department of Public Health has already begun meaningful action to combat climate and health impacts related to storms and flooding. In September 2015, the agency created a Flood Emergency Operations Plan and is in the process of developing Climate and Health Adaptation Plan to be released later this year. SFPDH will also be part of a collaborative community process with the Office of Resilience and Recovery to conduct community meetings at San Francisco's 29 public library branches beginning in late 2016 to promote climate health education and engage stakeholders in climate adaptation. This partnership was announced in the San Francisco Resiliency Strategy, a project supported by the Rockefeller Foundation's 100 Resilient Cities initiative.

REFERENCES:

San Francisco Department of Public Health's resources on climate and health:

[**Climate and Health - Understanding the Risk: An Assessment of San Francisco's Vulnerability to Flooding & Extreme Storms**](#)

An assessment that summarizes how flood inundation and extreme storms may impact public health and the communities most vulnerable to these impacts.

[**Interactive Maps on Flood Health Vulnerability Index**](#)

A set of interactive maps that allows users to explore and understand their health vulnerability to flooding and extreme storms in different San Francisco neighborhoods.

[**Health Education – Flooding & Mold**](#)

A brief information guide to health impacts of climate change, with an emphasis on mold and respiratory illness.

[**Flooding and Extreme Storm Emergency Plan**](#)

A report that focuses on San Francisco Department of Public Health responsibilities during and after both an extended flood generated from El Niño.

[**Flood Health Vulnerability Map Atlas**](#)

A series of 18 maps showing various factors related to flood vulnerability in different areas across San Francisco.

[**Health Impacts of Flooding**](#)

One-page overview of the main health impacts from flooding.

[**Centers for Disease Control's \(CDC\) Climate and Health Home Page**](#)

The CDC supports state and city health department efforts to develop and pilot methods to adapt to the present and future health effects of climate change. The San Francisco Department of Public Health receives funding from the CDC.

To keep up to date on the climate and health topic, follow [@sfclimatehealth](#) on Twitter and [@SF_DPH](#) for general San Francisco health news.

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