

Are You in Harm's Way?

Rising Seas Increase Flood Risk in California

Molly Samuel, KQED (San Francisco television), 3-15-12

Sea level rise compounded with storm surges and high tides could raise the water level by four feet.

Tens of thousands of Californians will be placed at risk in the years to come as sea levels continue rising along the California coast. The official planning parameter for the San Francisco Bay Area acknowledges a potential 16-inch rise by 2050. But with help from high tides and storm surges, it's not likely to stop there. A new tool from *Climate Central* maps out which cities, neighborhoods, and even streets, will be most affected.

The state's Cal-Adapt site offers a similar tool but the East Coast-based science education group, *Climate Central* has added a new layer: population. According to *Climate Central*, which is a content partner with *Climate Watch*, there's a one-in-six chance that under the right conditions — sea level rise, plus storm surge, plus high tides — the sea could rise four feet by 2030 in the Bay Area. That effects not just the coast, but also cities around the Bay and farther inland, in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta. The cities with the most people at risk are San Mateo, with 35,000 people living in areas that would be flooded under that scenario, and Stockton, with more than 72,000.

In Southern California, the threat is farther off, but by 2060, there's a one-in-six chance of sea levels topping a four-foot increase with help from a storm surge. If that happens, more than 44,000 people in Huntington Beach would be in harm's way, and 11,000 in LA.