

**ATTACHMENT F TO THE SOUTH CAROLINA EMERGENCY OPERATIONS PLAN**  
**VULNERABILITIES AND HAZARDS**

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A. Vulnerability Analysis (Demographics)

1. As of 2023, ESRI Business Analyst data estimates South Carolina's population to be 5,391,458. This represents an annual growth rate of 1.14% between the years 2020 and 2023.
2. Data estimates completed in 2021 and maintained by the SC Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism (SCPRT) show that approximately 30 million tourists visit the state annually.
3. The following statistics from the U.S. Census Bureau and ESRI Business Analyst illustrate the high level of vulnerability of the State's population to potential hazards:
  - 1,139,260 residents, more than 21% of the State's total population, reside in the 6 coastal counties (2023 estimate)
  - 15% of the State's estimated over 2.3 million housing units are mobile homes (2022 estimate)
  - 19.0% of the State's total population is 65 or older (2023 estimate)
  - 14.2% of the State's households live below the national poverty level (2022 estimate)
  - 5.4% of SC households do not have access to a vehicle (2023 estimate)
4. The proximity of the large percentage of the State's residential population to the coastline combined with a large tourist population creates the potential for a catastrophic loss of life and property due to an array of hazards.

B. Hazard Analysis

1. South Carolina is threatened by natural and technological hazards. The South Carolina Emergency Management Division (SCEMD) has researched and reviewed the risks of many hazards against the potential impact upon the State, Counties, tribal and supporting critical infrastructure.
2. Given the growing population and infrastructure expansion, the risk assessment and planning process for South Carolina is a continuous program.
3. The Hazard Analysis research and review included but was not limited to: geological hazards, meteorological hazards, public health emergencies, human-caused (accidental and intentional) incidents, and energy failures.

4. The State has conducted planning based on a hazard's relative frequency, potential severity, and historic information available.
5. The Analysis identified hazards as posing a threat both immediate (e.g., hazardous chemical spill, hurricane, tornado, etc.) and long-term (e.g., drought, chemical release, radiological release, etc.). These hazards have the potential to disrupt day-to-day activities, cause extensive property damage, and create mass casualties.
6. Historically, the greatest risk is from natural hazards (fires, tornadoes, floods, hurricanes, and earthquakes); however the continuing expansion of chemical usage and hazardous material transportation, to include transport of spent radiological fuel and low-level radiological waste, raises the technological hazards risk in South Carolina.
7. See the State of South Carolina Hazard Assessment (part of The South Carolina Hazard Mitigation Plan) for a detailed hazard analysis by county.
8. Table 1 (Hazard Rating Summary) in the basic plan provides a relative ranking of the hazards found in South Carolina based on probability of occurrence and potential level of consequence.

C. Natural and Man-made Hazards to South Carolina

1. Tropical Cyclones

- a. The State may be directly and indirectly affected by tropical cyclones.
- b. In the coastal counties, the greatest threat to life and property associated with tropical cyclones is storm surge inundation. Storm surge inundation is the total water level that occurs on normally dry ground and is expressed in terms of height of water above ground.
- c. Other hazards include high winds, tornadoes, and inland flooding associated with heavy rainfall that accompanies these storms.
- d. The State has six (6) Counties with coastlines bordering the Atlantic Ocean with over 200 miles of general coastline. The SC Coastal Counties are:
  - Horry
  - Georgetown
  - Charleston
  - Colleton
  - Beaufort

- Jasper
  - e. Two inland counties, Dorchester and Berkeley, are also vulnerable due to potential up-river storm surge along the Ashley and Cooper Rivers.
  - f. Densely populated coastal areas, especially during peak tourist seasons, coupled with the generally low coastal elevations, significantly increase the State's vulnerability.
  - g. See Appendix 1 (South Carolina Hurricane Plan) for more detailed information.
2. Earthquakes
- a. According to the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) National Seismic Hazard Model, South Carolina is extremely vulnerable to earthquake activity.
  - b. South Carolina experiences multiple earthquakes annually. These are typically low-level events with magnitudes less than 4.0. According to the USGS, 664 low-level earthquakes occurred in South Carolina between 1974-2024.
  - c. Approximately 52% of these occur along South Carolina's coastal plain and the region referred to as the Middleton Place-Summerville Seismic Zone (MPSSZ).
  - d. See Appendix 3 (South Carolina Earthquake Plan) for more detailed information.
3. Droughts
- a. According to the U.S. Drought Monitor, South Carolina experiences drought on an annual basis (D0- Abnormally Dry to D4- Exceptional Drought).
  - b. The length and severity of drought in South Carolina has varied greatly over the last 25 years.
  - c. See Appendix 10 (South Carolina Drought Response Plan) for more detailed information.
4. Extreme Heat
- a. Periods of high heat coupled with high humidity occur frequently in South Carolina during the months of June through September. The

intensity of the effects varies based on the physical location in the State.

- b. Many of the State's population, including seniors, low income families, and people experiencing homelessness, are particularly vulnerable to extreme temperatures.

5. Fires

a. Structural Fires

- (1) The threats of structural fire events facing the State's approximately 490 fire departments create the potential for catastrophic consequences and numerous fire related injuries, deaths, and widespread damage and loss.
- (2) While structure fires are occurring at lower rates across all areas of the State, both urban and rural structure fire severity are increasing each year.

b. Wildfires

- (1) Wildfires can infringe on developed and/or urban areas, and contribute to the structural fire problem. As the population grows and residential developments continue to expand into forested areas, wildland urban interface issues increase and more wildfires threaten homes.
- (2) People cause the majority of all SC wildfires, with the leading cause being arson. The second leading cause of wildfire is careless debris burning.
- (3) While wildfires occur throughout the year, the height of South Carolina's wildfire season usually occurs from late winter through early spring.

6. Flooding

a. There are five distinctive types of flooding in South Carolina.

(1) Coastal Flooding

- (a) Coastal flooding occurs when water is pushed inland as a result of storm surge and wind-driven waves produced by hurricanes, tropical storms, nor'easters, and other coastal storms.

- (b) Coastal flooding can occur during high tides. This tidal flooding occurs during astronomically high tides known as a perigee or King Tides. They are independent of floods caused from storm surge or rainfall. King Tides are predicted and expected over the course of the year.

(2) Dam/Levee Failure

- (a) South Carolina has approximately 2,500 State and Federally regulated dams and thousands of smaller, unregulated dams throughout the State.
- (b) Each dam or levee in the State has the potential to fail and release its impounded water, flooding the land downstream. The threat from dam failure increases from aging dams and increased development. New developments often include dams built for amenity ponds or retention basins. Many dams exist on smaller streams that are not mapped as floodplains or subject to floodplain regulation, leaving downstream residents unaware of potential risks.
- (c) See Appendix 4 (South Carolina Dam Failure Emergency Response Plan) for more detailed information.

(3) Local Drainage

Local drainage problems can occur anywhere in the State where the ground is flat, where the drainage pattern has been disrupted, or where channels or culverts have not been maintained.

(4) Flash Flooding

- (a) Flash flooding occurs when short, heavy rainfall, accumulates in areas faster than the ground is able to absorb it.
- (b) Flash flooding can be exacerbated in many urban areas by inadequate drainage systems and urban growth that does not account for surface run off.

(5) Riverine Flooding

- (a) Riverine Flooding occurs when an increase in water volume within a river channel causes an overflow onto the surrounding floodplain.
- (b) See Appendix 19 (South Carolina Flood Response Plan) for more detailed information.

7. Coastal Hazards

a. Coastal Erosion

- (1) Erosion is a process that breaks down and wears away land due to physical and chemical processes of water, wind, and general meteorological conditions. An area's potential for erosion is determined by four factors: soil characteristics, vegetative cover, climate or rainfall, and topography. The two major erosion mechanisms are wind and water. Wind that blows across sparsely vegetated or disturbed lands can cause erosion by picking up soil, carrying it through the air, and displacing it in another place. Water erosion occurs over land and in streams and channels. Major storms can cause coastal erosion from the combination of high winds, heavy surf, and storm surge. The SC Department of Environmental Services (SCDES) Bureau of Coastal Management revises long-term beach erosion rates, as well as the state's beachfront baseline and 40 year set back line every eight to ten years. This process was recently completed in 2018. Based on this analysis of shoreline changes since the mid-1800s, and other independent researchers, South Carolina's beaches appear to be experiencing net erosion in general, but beach nourishment has been keeping pace with this underlying trend in most cases. Long-term shoreline change rates varies from marginally accretion along some standard beaches, to highly erosional (as much as 20 feet per year) in some highly dynamic inlet areas. Beginning with Hurricane Irene in 2011, Folly Beach in Charleston County has experienced above average erosion rates and is considered one of the most vulnerable beaches in South Carolina.

b. Sea Level Rise

- (1) Coastal areas are sensitive to a variety of hazards, including storms, erosion, and gradual sea level rise. It is difficult to predict the amount of sea level rise along the coast of South Carolina, but there are numerous factors related to this

hazard including land subsidence, groundwater depletion, wave action, hurricanes, and natural climate variation.

- (2) The sea level on the South Carolina coast is up to 10 inches higher than it was in 1950 according to [sealevelrise.org](https://sealevelrise.org). According to the City of Charleston Sea Level Rise Strategy, Charleston experienced an average of 2 days of flooding per year, but now it is projected that the City could experience 180 days of tidal flooding by 2045.

8. Severe Thunderstorms and Lightning

- a. The majority of the State experiences approximately 60 days per year with a thunderstorm event, while the most northern part of the State experiences approximately 50 days per year with a thunderstorm event.
- b. According to NOAA's Storm Events Database, for the period 2012-2024, there were 7,232 reported Thunderstorm Wind events resulting in 12 deaths and 62 injuries, 147 Lightning events resulting in 4 deaths and 43 injuries, and 2,069 Hail events resulting in 30 injuries.

9. Winter Weather

- a. Winter storms can damage property, create safety risks, destroy crops and valuable timber, damage infrastructure components such as power lines, and have enormous economic impacts.
- b. South Carolina can anticipate at least one significant winter storm per year.
- c. According to NOAA's Storm Events Database, for the period 2012-2024 there were 503 reports of Winter Weather, which resulted in 2 deaths and 2 injuries.
- d. See Appendix 18 (South Carolina Winter Weather Plan) for more detailed information.

10. Tornadoes

- a. According to NOAA's Storm Events Database, for the period 2012-2024, South Carolina experienced 330 Tornado events resulting in 9 deaths and 118 injuries.
- b. The South Carolina State Climate Office Monthly Tornadoes (1950-2024) database shows that the highest number of tornadoes occurs

in March through May. There is also a secondary peak in September due to tropical activity.

- c. Between 1950 and 2024, South Carolina experienced 518 (E) F0 tornadoes, 482 (E) F1 tornadoes, 161 (E) F2, 36 (E) F3, and 11 (E) F4 tornadoes. There are no (E) F5 tornadoes on record in SC.
- d. The most recent tornado outbreak occurred in April 2020. There were 28 total tornadoes with 12 of those considered significant tornadoes (EF2+). The event resulted in 9 deaths. 21 tornadoes were also confirmed in South Carolina during Hurricane Helene in September 2024.
- e. The highest tornado death toll on record in South Carolina occurred on April 30, 1924 when two tornadoes moved through the state. The paths of both were unusually long; each over 100 miles in length. One tornado remained on the ground from Anderson County to York County. The second tornado (The “Horrell Hill Tornado”) was the more destructive of the two; its path was 135 miles from Aiken County to Florence County. Together, the two tornados killed 77 people, injured 778, and destroyed 465 homes. These tornadoes resulted in millions of dollars in damage.

## 11. Tsunami

- a. Tsunamis are ocean waves produced by earthquakes or underwater landslides and may occur at any time, day, or night.
- b. A tsunami is actually a series of waves that can travel at speeds averaging 450 (and up to 600) miles per hour in the open ocean.
- c. See Appendix 11 (South Carolina Tsunami Response Plan) for more detailed information.

## 12. Sinkholes and Landslides

### a. Sinkholes

- (1) Sinkholes form on karst terrain, which is a region of bedrock that can be dissolved by water. Water that is slightly acidic dissolves bedrock to form channels in the rock called conduits. When rain moves through the soil, it erodes and dissolves the karst bedrock. This action creates cracks that are part of the conduit system and moves soil particles through it. When soil is carried off, the soil surface above the conduit may form a small depression that acts as a funnel to gather more water, and repeats the soil movement cycle in the crevices and conduits.



- (2) While sinkholes can occur suddenly and expectantly, there are signs that can signal a potential development. Additionally, sinkhole formation may be aggravated by development and urbanization from increased water usage, altered drainage pathways and land surfaces.

b. Landslides

- (1) According to the United States Geological Survey Landslide Hazards Program, landslides are geologic hazards that occur in all states, and cause \$1-2 billion dollars in damage, and over 25 average annual fatalities. Mass wasting is the downward movement of rock material. Landslides are a type of mass wasting, which refers to the sudden collapse of a slope, or also known as a slope failure. Other types of mass wasting include mudflow, earthflow, creep, rock fall, slump, and these are characterized by their speed of downward movement and the amount of moisture.
- (2) Upstate South Carolina most closely fits the typical landslide topography as outlined by the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), with steep slopes on Table Rock, Caesars Head, and Glassy Mountain as areas having rock slides. In the Piedmont, minor landslides are more prevalent due to slope failure of saprolite and soil, leading to gully formation. These are primarily triggered by rain events and erosion. In the state's Coastal Plain, riverbanks are susceptible to slope failure on a larger scale, causing erosion. While South Carolina is susceptible to landslides, no major events have occurred in the past.

13. Infectious Disease Outbreak or Other Public Health Emergency

- a. Infectious disease outbreaks or other public health emergencies may occur in South Carolina with little or no notice.
- b. Infectious diseases can spread with rapidly, threatening the health and life safety of South Carolina residents. Infectious disease outbreaks have the ability to endanger the continuity of essential functions of society.
- c. Impacts from infectious disease outbreaks can go beyond morbidity and mortality, the potential for infrastructure, businesses and industries to be adversely impacted by high rates of absenteeism, combined with potential for overburdened healthcare resources, could foster a significant economic and humanitarian disaster for South Carolina.

- d. The circumstances surrounding infectious disease emergencies include many variables such as types of agents, scale of exposure, and mode of transmission or intentionality (bioterrorism or agroterrorism). While environmental, technologic, and societal factors can have an impact on the outbreak of emerging diseases worldwide, drug-resistant forms with no susceptibilities can often emerge due to climate changes, terrorism, and increasingly more compacted human populations.
- e. Infectious disease can present special requirements for disease surveillance, rapid delivery of vaccines, antibiotics, antiviral drugs, or other medical countermeasures, allocation of limited medical resources and expansion of health care services to meet a surge in demand for care.
- f. Infectious Disease outbreaks or other public health emergencies may include (but are not limited to) naturally occurring outbreaks (e.g., measles, mumps, meningococcal disease), emerging infectious diseases (e.g., SARS, Avian Influenza, Ebola, Zika, COVID-19), food-borne outbreaks and types of terrorism.
- g. Public health emergencies may include secondary and third order effects resulting from accidents/incidents of chemical or radiological release, historic levels of global human displacement and the negative effects of environmental degradation and climate change.
- h. Rapid advances in Biotechnology increase the likelihood of a bioterrorism or agroterrorism event.
- i. Global interconnectedness of South Carolina's business, tourism, energy and other economic sectors contribute to high levels of risk for Infectious Disease and Other Public Health emergencies.
- j. See Appendix 5 (South Carolina Mass Casualty Plan) and Appendix 14 (South Carolina Infectious Disease Plan) for more detailed information.

14. Active Shooter/Hostile Action

- a. An active shooter is an individual(s) actively engaged in killing or attempting to continuously harm people. In most cases, active shooters use firearms, and there is generally no pattern or method to the selection of victims. Most active shooter/hostile action situations are over within 10 to 15 minutes.

- b. See Appendix 13 (South Carolina Active Shooter/Hostile Action Consequence Management Plan) for more detailed information.

15. Civil Disturbance

- a. Civil disturbances may occur at any time in South Carolina. However, civil disorder is often preceded by periods of increased tension caused by questionable social and/or political events such as controversial jury trials or law enforcement actions.
- b. See Appendix 7 (South Carolina Civil Disturbance Plan) for more detailed information.

16. Hazardous Materials Spill or Release

- a. The State's industrial capacity and the network of interstate highways and railways result in vulnerabilities to hazardous material releases from both stationary sites and transportation sources.
  - (1) As of February 2025, for the reporting year of 2023- 2024, 4,526 facilities reported chemical inventories as required by federal EPCRA (Emergency Planning Community Right-to-Know Act) regulations. Of those 1,341 reported storing extremely hazardous substances exceeding the Threshold Planning Quantity as classified by Section 302/304 of the Federal Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act (SARA, Title III). Approximately 3,899 of these facilities also reported various chemical inventories of more than 10,000 pounds as classified by Section 311/312 of the SARA, Title III. These facilities are located throughout the State in both rural and densely populated areas and do not include retail gas stations, warehouses, most power sub-stations, or telephone relay battery storage sites.
  - (2) Data indicates the majority of these facilities are clustered along Interstate 85. While the greatest number of facilities are concentrated along that route, numerous other toxic release inventory facilities, are located throughout the State adjacent to large population centers.
  - (3) Many facilities located in coastal Counties could be impacted by hurricane force winds and rains.
- b. An accident/incident occurring along the extensive network of interstate highways and railways that supply industries with chemical and petroleum products could result in a moderate to large accidental release of hazardous materials from a transportation source.

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17. Radiological Release

a. Nuclear Facilities

- (1) There are four commercial nuclear power plants, one Department of Defense facility, and one Federal Department of Energy facility within the State of South Carolina, as well as at least one industrial facility that maintains a significant amount of radiological material on-site as a part of its process. In addition, there are three nuclear power plants located in two neighboring States from which a radiological release could affect South Carolina and its citizens.
- (2) Forty-one of South Carolina's 46 counties fall within the 10 or 50-mile Emergency Planning Zones of at least one nuclear power plant.
- (3) See Appendix 2 (South Carolina Operational Radiological Emergency Response Plan) for more detailed information.

b. Transportation of Nuclear Materials

- (1) The South Carolina Department of Environmental Services (DES) maintains situational awareness of the transport of radiological waste and materials into and through the State of South Carolina.
- (2) SC DES maintains the processes and procedures to address potential releases of radiological materials/waste during transportation.

18. Terrorism

- a. While there have not been any successful acts of terrorism committed in South Carolina, the many critical and high-profile facilities, high concentrations of population and other potentially attractive venues for terrorist activity make the State inherently vulnerable to a variety of terrorist methods.
- b. See Appendix 8 (South Carolina Terrorism Incident Plan) for more detailed information.

19. Cyber Attack

- a. DHS has identified cyber related threats as one of the primary threats to U.S. Critical Infrastructure/Key Resources (CI/KR).

- b. Based on current reporting, various nation-state adversaries and non-state actors have demonstrated the intent and capability to gain unauthorized access, exploit and/or attack both public and private sector computer networks. First-order dependencies and interdependencies between CI/KR sectors create vulnerabilities that can cause cascading negative effects to the physical environment and the citizens of South Carolina.
- c. Reliable and secure communications systems will be required to enable a coordinated multi-agency response in the event current communication systems are inoperable. Coordination and communication with CI/KR private sector owner/operators will be critical to an effective response and recovery effort.
- d. Significant cyber incidents initiate cascading effects that could affect each phase of emergency management including preparedness, response, recovery and mitigation.
- e. Interconnected computer networks regulate the flow of electrical power, natural gas, fuel, water, solid waste, financial services, medical care, public safety, telecommunications, and transportation systems. The consequences of a significant cyber incident could cause significant disruption of CI/KR operations and economic losses for South Carolina.
- f. Any cyber incident impacting private or public networks within South Carolina will be considered a criminal act. Criminal acts and resulting criminal investigative actions, to include the investigation, attribution, and apprehension of suspected threat actors, fall under the purview of the South Carolina Law Enforcement Division (SLED).
- g. See Appendix 16 (SC Cyber Incident Consequence Management Plan) for more detailed information.

#### D. Repatriation

1. In addition to natural and man-made hazards, over one million U.S. citizens and their dependents live, visit and travel in foreign countries. An emergency may occur at any time requiring these citizens and their dependents to immediately evacuate to the United States.
2. The US Department of State (DOS) is responsible for emergency repatriation operations and has designated Charleston, South Carolina as one of several Points of Entry (POE) on the east coast.
3. The US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) is the lead Federal agency with responsibility for planning, coordinating and execution

of the repatriation sites, assisted by the Department of Social Services (DSS) at the State level.

4. See Appendix 12 (South Carolina Repatriation Plan) for more detailed information.

E. Long-Term Power Outage

1. A long-term power outage (LTPO) affecting South Carolina poses a significant threat to the social, health, safety, and economic well-being of the citizens and visitors within South Carolina. Due to the nature of some of the threats (Black-Sky Hazards) that could cause a LTPO within South Carolina, an LTPO could occur with little to no warning and will involve multiple governmental jurisdictions and geographic areas.
2. The effects on the electric grid could require the need for the utilities to conduct black-start operations to re-energize the grid and restore electricity to the population of South Carolina.
3. Black-start restoration efforts have to be conducted in a certain manner that is based on the design and physics of the affected electric grid. The geography of the affected systems requiring support may or may not align with efforts to support life-sustaining and life-saving operations to the affected population.
4. Response to a LTPO will require a coordinated consequence management effort from all levels of government, volunteer organizations, and private sector partners. No single private sector entity or local, tribal, state, or federal government agency possesses the authority or expertise to act unilaterally. Response to a long-term power outage will involve two major concurrent operational efforts; the restoration of power and lifesaving and life-sustaining efforts. Restoration of electric power will remain within the purview of the utility companies.
5. If a need for state engagement to support energy restoration efforts arises, the South Carolina Office of Regulatory Staff, as the lead of ESF-12 (Energy) as well as the lead state agency for the energy sector within South Carolina, coordinates those efforts from ESF-12 in the SEOC. However, the utility companies will maintain operational control over restoration effort.
6. See Appendix 15 (SC Long-Term Power Outage Plan) for more detailed information.