

SCIPP RESEARCH BRIEF: AN EVALUATION OF THE UTILITY OF A DECISION- MAKER-DRIVEN CLIMATE HAZARD ASSESSMENT TOOL

Rachel Riley - The University of Oklahoma

WHAT IS THE SIMPLE PLANNING TOOL?

The Simple Planning Tool (SPT) is a compilation of relatively easy-to-use online interactive tools, maps, and graphs to assist planners and emergency managers in Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, and Texas who are assessing their long-term climate risks, both historically and in the future. It is primarily designed for decision-makers who serve small- to medium-sized communities, but may also be of interest to those who serve larger areas. Visit www.southernclimate.org/spt to access the tool.

STUDY METHODS:

In spring 2019, 104 decision makers across Oklahoma and Arkansas participated in a survey about the usefulness and impact of the tool. Responses were primarily received from emergency managers, planners, and fire officials. Participants were asked to answer 7-25 questions depending on previous questions answered and awareness of the SPT.

RESULTS:

INDICATORS OF UTILITY

Most participants indicated that they used the SPT to become better informed about an issue or to gather information for a plan, but some also used it to gather information for a presentation/meeting or to inform new decisions.

FREQUENCY OF USE

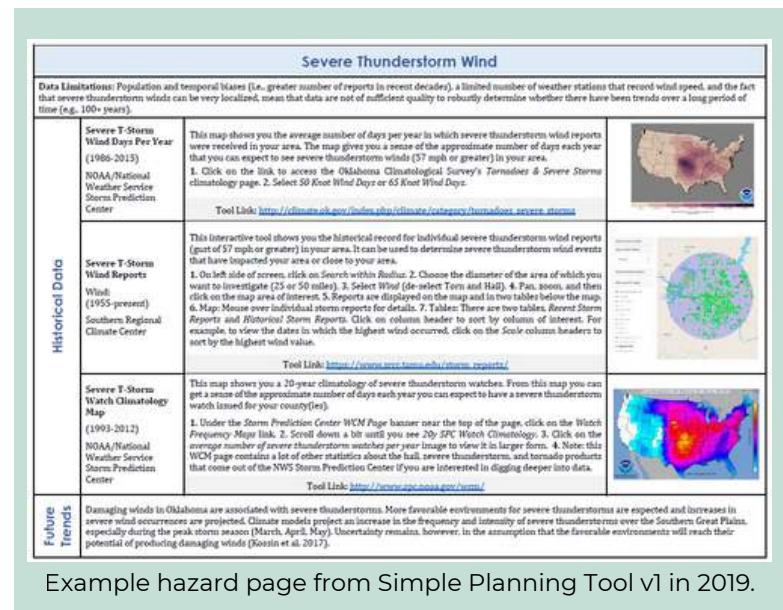
Frequency of use varied among the participants, with most responses indicating they used it once per year, once per month, or every six months (in that order). These results are likely due to participants using the tool for plan updates or other similar job responsibilities.

HAZARD SECTION USEFULNESS

The SPT sections rated as the most useful were *future trend summaries*, *historical data tools*, *historical FEMA/presidential disaster declarations*, and *incentive and action programs for risk reduction*. No participants who have used the SPT indicated they have not used a particular section.

CONCLUSIONS:

Though the survey indicated that the SPT had few users at the time, this could be explained by the survey being conducted one year after the tool's release, lack of hazard planners across studied states, plans only needing updating every 5-20 years, and lack of users' scientific expertise to employ climate information. However, the participants that had used the SPT stressed its value and their survey answers will be used to better understand the product's strengths and uses.



PURPOSE OF USE

Of those who indicated that they had used the SPT to gather information for a plan, the most common specific plan was the FEMA Hazard Mitigation Plan. A comprehensive plan and emergency operations plan tied for second most common.

IMPACT ON WORK

When asked how the SPT has impacted their work, most participants indicated that it helped them gather more comprehensive hazard data than before, while some indicated it saved them time, and others noted that it helped them communicate more effectively to elected officials, colleagues, and stakeholders.