

Atlas created to help cope with climate change

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A NEW tool has been created to help South Africans grasp the risks associated with climate change in a tangible way.

For example, if sea water levels are predicted to rise by 1m, the South African Risk and Vulnerability Atlas will give more specific data that will enable city planners to determine how this will affect current and future property developments in all of the country's regions.

It draws upon information

from various sources to paint comprehensive scenarios at national, regional and municipal level for decision-makers in all sectors. The atlas – which will be available online in the next two to three weeks – will be free and accessible to anyone with an internet connection and will be continuously updated as new information becomes available.

It was developed by the Department of Science and Technology in partnership with the Centre for Scientific and Industrial Research.

The atlas was introduced on Friday to the Gauteng business community, which will be able to use it to gauge variables like how increased rainfall because of climate change is likely to disrupt supply-chain management or hike insurance rates.

Wits University sustainability expert Professor Coleen Vogel said it would enable communities to mobilise around issues such as how destruction caused by increased flooding was going to make residents more vulnerable to risks like

fire, xenophobia and rape.

CSIR systems ecologist Dr Bob Scholes said there was an increasing divide between science and society, making it difficult for ordinary people to understand climate change.

Minister of Science and Technology Naledi Pandor says in an introduction to the atlas: "While many of the future scenarios projected to occur over the next few decades paint a daunting future, we must not forget that South Africa has a history of creating miracles out of dire circumstances."