

Outdoor Air Pollution – Our areas of work – Public Health Scotland

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Dr Sarah Robertson, Healthcare Scientist Advanced
Scottish Air Quality Annual Seminar 2025
26th March 2025

Overview

- Introduction to Public Health Scotland's (PHS) Environmental Public Health (EPH) Team
- Outdoor air pollution and health in Scotland and the role of the EPH team
- Reflecting on 2024 and planning for 2025/26
- Questions and answers



Environmental Public Health Team



Dr Kate Mark,
Consultant in
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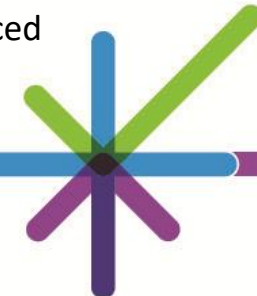


Dr Sarah
Robertson,
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Dr Huw Jones,
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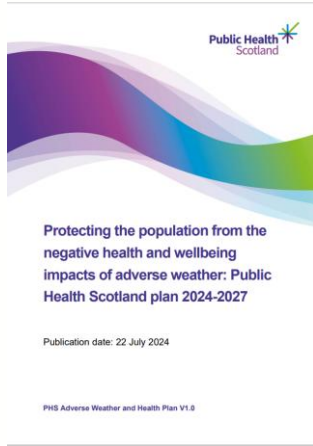


Our Work

Collaborate with a wide range of stakeholders

Evidence generation, synthesis & surveillance

Preparedness and Response to chemical & environmental incidents



Environmental public health

Environmental Health Health protection

Overview

Publications

Data and surveillance

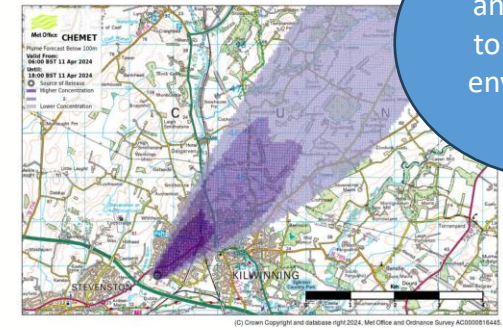
Scottish Environmental Incident Surveillance System (SEISS)

SEISS publications

Data and surveillance

Scottish Environmental Incident Surveillance System (SEISS)

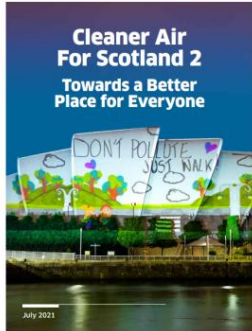
We manage the Scottish Environmental Incident Surveillance System (SEISS). SEISS collects surveillance of environmental incidents in Scotland which involve risk to human health.



EU Reference method equivalent analysers

- Nitrogen oxides
- Sulphur dioxide
- Carbon monoxide
- PM₁₀
- PM_{2.5}
- Samplers
- Met sensors

SEPA logo



Protecting the population from the negative health and wellbeing impacts of adverse weather: Public Health Scotland plan 2024-2027

Publication date: 22 July 2024

PHS Adverse Weather and Health Plan V1.0

NEWS

'Not suitable for under-4s': New industry guidance issued on glycerol in slush-ice drinks

The FSA has issued new voluntary industry guidance on glycerol in slush-ice drinks, advising that they should not be sold to children four years of age and under.

Lead poisoning



About Log Out

Scottish Health Protection Information Resource (SHPIR)

Development & delivery of plans, strategies & resources

Provision of training & capacity building

Sit on networks, committees & advisory groups

Environmental Incident Response Guide

Environmental Public Health Team

Publication date: 14 August 2023



Search website

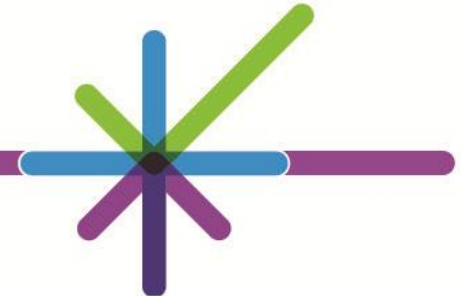
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Home > Publications > Public health guidance for cyanobacteria > Public health guidance for cyanobacteria

Public health guidance for cyanobacteria

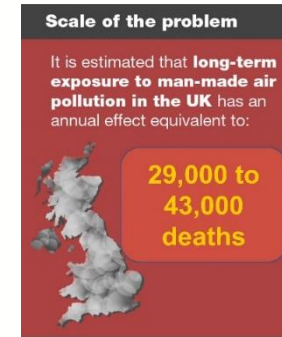
Version 1

Published 27 June 2024 (Latest release)
Type Guidance
Author Public Health Scotland

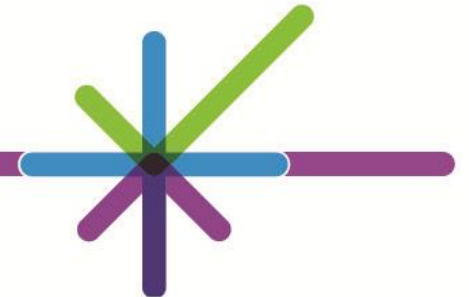
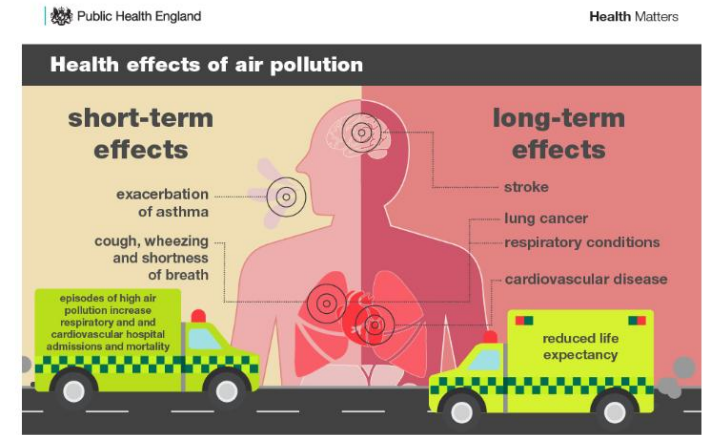


Outdoor Air Pollution and Health in Scotland

- Outdoor air pollution is one of the greatest environmental risks to public health in Scotland, [contributing to as many as 2,700 deaths a year](#), and is one of the main avoidable causes of death and disease globally.
- But its impacts go even further, being a major contributor of preventable ill health and a driver of health inequalities.
- Causes harm at all stages of life, from before birth to old age.
- Health problems can occur because of both short- and long-term exposure.
- Risk factor for respiratory and cardiovascular diseases and lung cancer.
- Can make existing health conditions – such as asthma and COPD – worse.



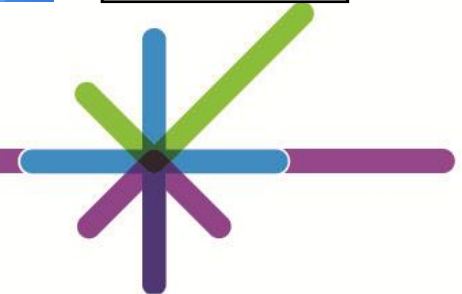
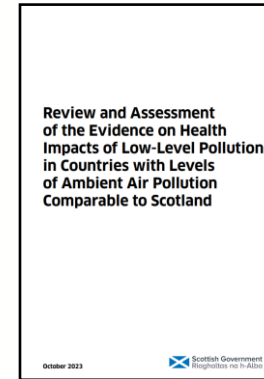
- England, 26,000 to 38,000
- Wales, 1,200 to 2,000
- Scotland, 1,800 to 2,700
- Northern Ireland, 470 to 730



Outdoor Air Pollution and Health in Scotland cont.

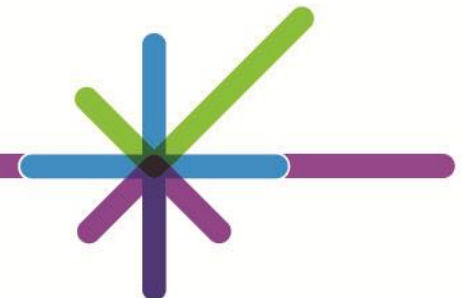
- There is also growing evidence linking outdoor air pollution to a wider range of health effects, including adverse birth outcomes, diabetes and increased dementia risk.
- Although outdoor air pollution can affect everyone, there are significant inequalities in exposure and vulnerability to air pollution in Scotland.
- While there has been huge progress in improving air quality in Scotland (as a result of cross-sectoral leadership, policy and action), there is increasing evidence that negative health effects occur at levels below legal limits.

Outdoor air pollution in Scotland remains a threat to human health and risks further entrenching existing health inequalities and placing further avoidable demand on our health and care services!



Outdoor Air Pollution and the role of PHS

- The need to strengthen public and professional awareness of the harmful effects of outdoor air pollution and how to reduce avoidable harm has been highlighted in the:
 - [Coroners Prevention of Future Deaths report](#) following the inquest into the death of Ella Adoo Kissi Debrah.
 - Findings from the Air Quality Information System (AQIS) review.
- As Scotland's national public health body, PHS is uniquely positioned to raise awareness and help to put health at the centre of air pollution action.
- A [survey](#) of adults across Scotland revealed that the public are more likely to trust information on the health risks of air pollution if it comes from an official health body like PHS.

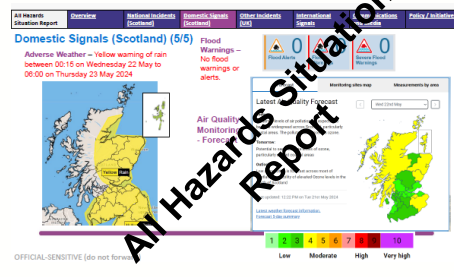


Our Strategy

- The focus of our strategy is on helping to protect the Scottish population from the negative health and wellbeing impacts of air pollution.
- We do this by:
 - Raising public and professional awareness of the major sources of air pollution and their harmful effects.
 - Supporting the public to take action to protect their health and reduce their contributions to pollution through education and information provision.
 - Trying to engage and motivate people by drawing out the benefits/co-benefits of taking action.
 - Informing and influencing policies and actions to improve air quality and protect the health and wellbeing of everyone in Scotland.
 - Fostering a collaborative approach, ensuring a unified message across all channels.
 - Supporting the public health response to incidents that affects air quality, such as fires and air pollution episodes.



Reflecting on 2024



The Environment Strategy for Scotland: Progress report on Environment Strategy March 2024

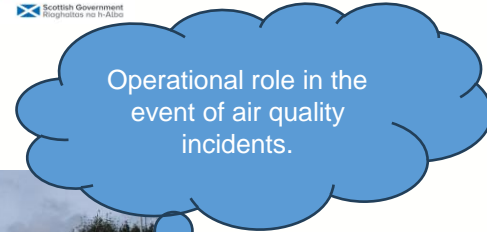


Helping to integrate air pollution and health in relevant policies.

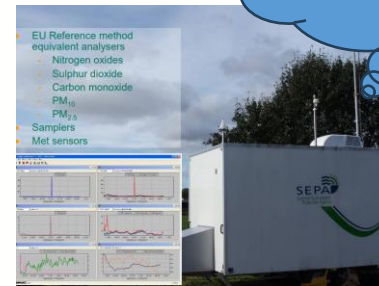
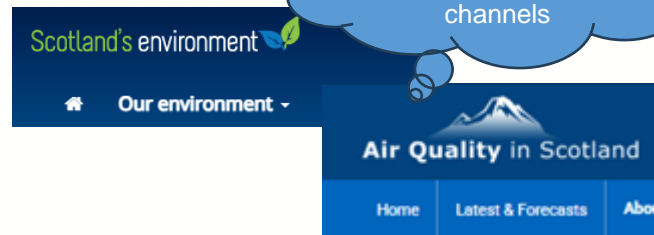


Committee on the Medical Effects of Air Pollutants

Committee on the Medical Effects of Air Pollutants (COMEAP) advises the government on all matters concerning the health effects of air pollutants.



Presentations, networks and blogs

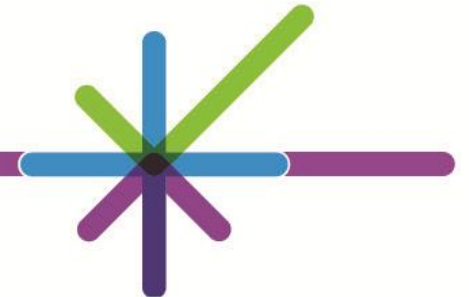


Airborne Hazard Emergency Response Service



Planning for 2025/26 (*not final or absolute*)

- Support Clean Air Day 2025 and explore other communication channels and networks to increase public and professional awareness and understanding of the links between air pollution and human health and of the importance of action.
- Continue to support Scottish Government in the delivery of the Cleaner Air for Scotland 2 Strategy and support policy development of the next air quality framework.
- Work with stakeholders to link the co-benefits of air pollution action to other relevant policy areas (for example, climate change, active travel).
- Work with stakeholders to review PHS's existing operational approach during air pollution episodes (for example, short-term episodes of poor air quality due to transboundary pollution, weather conditions or atmospheric chemistry). Outputs will help to:
 - Identify gaps in the existing operational strategy.
 - Better understand who needs to know and what they need to know.
 - Coordinate information sharing and public communications.



Planning for 2025/26 cont. (not final or absolute)

- Work with relevant stakeholders to review and consider the implications of the AQIS Review and decide on next steps.
- Explore and scope opportunities to develop an air pollution indicator to help better understand the impact programmes and policies are having on Scotland's health and wellbeing.



Ask to Attendees

- **PROVIDE FEEDBACK** on our future plans. Help us to identify gaps and areas where PHS can have added value.
- **HELP** to make others aware of our work – for example, take a look at our [NHS inform page](#) and our [webpage](#) – and share among your stakeholders and networks.
- **HELP**, us to identify other ways (for example, professional groups, networks or communication channels) we could explore to increase awareness, knowledge and engagement.



Thank you!
Any Questions?

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