

*Environment Agency. March (2005)*

**The Climate is Changing: Time to Get Ready**

The European climate is expected to change slowly i.e. decades not years. Several risks have been identified and measures could be taken to reduce the associated liabilities.

The report confirms the Agency view that average annual temperatures will rise steadily in the UK, perhaps by as much as 4°C by 2080. Severe summer storms, long dry periods and heavy winter rains are predicted.

Liability related issues are largely self evident:

- 1) Storms cause sewage outflow into the open and into residential and work properties. Design and installation failures could be insured.
- 2) Flooding may also cause release of stored toxins.
- 3) Flood defence products may be defective.
- 4) Driving conditions may cause accidents.
- 5) Extensive periods of high temperatures lead to health risks for the heavily dependent and aged population. [DoH guidance is available on this].
- 6) Storage of perishables may be compromised.
- 7) River water quality may be unsuitable for leisure activities.
- 8) It may be too hot to work, especially problematic for high risk jobs requiring concentrated effort e.g. driving, operating heavy plant and in hot industries. Heatstroke.
- 9) Poor air quality may render ventilation of hazardous workplaces inadequate.
- 10) Disease may spread more easily or find novel means of propagation. E.g. Zoonoses.



Control measures would include infrastructure improvements, and changes in best practice.

**Comment**

Sudden changes in climate would be expected if the Gulf Stream were to be interrupted. There are signs that this could happen during a period of rapid melting of the polar ice sheet.