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Press Relation Officer: Martin Ittershagen

Deputy Press Relation Officer: Stephan Gabriel Haufe

PR-staff: Magnus Maier Marc Rathmann, Martin Stallmann;
Office: Doreen Redlich, Uwe Weber

Telephone: +49 340 2103 -2122, -6625, -2067, -2250, -2507, -2669, -2637

Address: Federal Environment Agency, P.O. box 1406, 06813 Dessau-Roßlau

E-Mail: pressestelle@uba.de

Internet: www.umweltbundesamt.de

Facebook: www.facebook.com/umweltbundesamt.de



Being prepared for extreme weather events

BBK, BBSR, DWD, THW and UBA present research findings at joint press conference

Extreme weather events are proving to be a challenge for our society time and again. Heat waves such as that in the summer of 2003 are associated with great stress on human health and may even result in deaths. Heavy precipitation and winter storms repeatedly cause enormous damage to infrastructure and buildings and put humans at risk. Extreme weather events and all the associated consequences are expected to become more significant for man and the environment in future. It is a matter of how frequently and how severely these events will occur and how can prepare for these changes.

The Federal Office of Civil Protection and Disaster Assistance (BBK), the Federal Institute for Research on Building, Urban Affairs and Spatial Development (BBSR), the National Meteorological Service (DWD), the federal agency Technisches Hilfswerk (THW) and the Federal Environment Agency (UBA) have formed a strategic alliance of authorities to adapt to climate change in which they will jointly address these questions. Today's press conference will not only present select research findings of a collaborative project, it will also introduce the focus areas of action of each of the authorities in the alliance.

Germany must be prepared for extreme weather conditions

"Higher average temperatures will result in more frequent and more intense weather events. The greatest increase will be in the number of particularly hazardous weather phenomena. The damage potential of these events will rise accordingly. Germany must take appropriate preventative measures in due time."

(Dr. Paul Becker, Vice-President, DWD)

Improve public warning systems and public's ability to cope

"The first conclusion to be drawn from the research project results about civil protection is to expand the warning system in Germany quickly and comprehensively. Firstly, we are developing the satellite-based warning system into a modular warning system. Secondly, we want to improve the public's ability to help themselves and each other before professional help arrives."

(Christoph Unger, President BBK)

Cities must protect themselves against the heat

"Climate change is also having an impact on life in our cities. Cities are heating up and will have to adapt their infrastructure accordingly. It will become increasingly important to create fresh air corridors and green areas in the vicinity of living and work environments."

(DirProf. Harald Herrmann, Director BBSR)

Extreme weather events will call for help from professionals in all areas of civil protection

"Extreme weather events have been and are still the most common and frequent large-scale disasters in Germany. The damage they incur is immense and will continue to require the deployment of help from the entire field of civil protection."

(Gerd Friedsam, Vice-President THW)

Need for intensive information campaigns about climate risks

"Climate adaptation measures are already paying off today. The greening of roofs and courtyards, installing shading elements on buildings or the use of heat-resistant road surfacing are examples of protection against climate change risks. The sooner they are implemented, the greater the benefit. The Federal Environment Agency therefore recommends providing funding for the greening of roofs in urban areas."

(Dr. Kora Kristof, Head of Department, 'Sustainability Strategies' at UBA)

The goal of the strategic alliance of authorities is to address the need to protect the civil population and the requirements of spatial planning as overlapping thematic fields, as laid out in the German Strategy for Adaptation to Climate Change. The perspectives of the respective authorities complement each other to comprise a holistic approach to the challenge.

Note: You can read the speeches by the representatives of the authorities on the BBK web page at www.bbk.bund.de/. For the complete report on the project titled *Auswertung regionaler Klimaprojektionen für Deutschland hinsichtlich der Änderung des Extremverhaltens von Temperatur, Niederschlag und Windgeschwindigkeit* [Evaluation of regional climate projections for Germany in reaction to extreme changes in temperature, precipitation and wind speeds] is available online from the DWD at www.dwd.de/pressekonferenz (in German only)

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