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Sea-level rise of concern for Miami

Pressure mounting on elected leaders

Christina Vazquez

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MIAMI – When it comes to sea-level rise, Miami is ground zero.

Salt water is encroaching and water managers are already adapting to a new normal.

Pressure is mounting on elected leaders to ensure infrastructure is climate-ready, and South Florida has a lot to lose if nothing is done.

On its list of 20 coastal cities most at risk from assets' exposure to coastal flooding, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development ranked Miami as No. 1.

Mitch Chester, a Sunny Isles Beach attorney with a passion for the issue, said he's worried condominium associations and homeowners are not adequately informed and prepared for what is coming.

Jayantha Obeysekera, director of the Hydrologic and Environmental Systems Modeling Department at the South Florida Water Management District, said flood-control structures built in the 1950s are becoming ineffective. Such is the case for a canal along South Miami River Drive.

On Virginia Key, just a few feet from Biscayne Bay, sits Miami-Dade County's central wastewater treatment plant. Facing the threat of a lawsuit and millions of dollars in fines for Clean Water Act violations, Miami-Dade County struck a deal with federal regulators to overhaul the county's aging sewer system, but no specific language involving sea-level rise was included.

Albert Slap took the issue to federal court, hoping a judge would force the county to redraft the plans to accommodate for sea-level rise and expected strong storm surges, but he couldn't convince a judge to make it a legally binding obligation.

Rank	Country	Urban Agglomeration	Exposed Assets Current (\$Billion)	Exposed Assets Future (\$Billion)
1	USA	Miami	416.29	3,513.04
2	CHINA	Guangzhou	84.17	3,357.72
3	USA	New York-Newark	320.20	2,147.35
4	INDIA	Kolkata (Calcutta)	31.99	1,961.44
5	CHINA	Shanghai	72.86	1,771.17
6	INDIA	Mumbai	46.20	1,598.05
7	CHINA	Tianjin	29.62	1,231.48
8	JAPAN	Tokyo	174.29	1,207.07
9	CHINA	Hong Kong	35.94	1,163.89
10	THAILAND	Bangkok	38.72	1,117.54
11	CHINA	Ningbo	9.26	1,073.93



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16	VIETNAM	Ho Chi Minh City	26.86	652.82
17	JAPAN	Nagoya	109.22	623.42
18	CHINA	Qingdao	2.72	601.59
19	USA	Virginia Beach	84.64	581.69
20	EGYPT	Alexandria	28.46	563.28

*Table 2: Top 20 cities ranked in terms of assets exposed to coastal flooding in the 2070s (including both climate change and socioeconomic change) and showing present-day exposure
(Source: Nicholls et al (2007), OECD, Paris)*

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