

Community-Focused Exposure and Risk Screening Tool (C-FERST)

The Community-Focused Exposure and Risk Screening Tool (C-FERST) is an online information access and mapping tool that communities can use to learn more about their environmental issues and exposures. The tool includes local maps, reports, fact sheets and links to other environmental and public health tools, and structured guides to help communities assess local environmental conditions. It provides step-by-step guidance for community-based assessments, as well as a means to communicate and translate relevant science to communities. C-FERST is intended to provide screening-level information to help users learn about community environmental and public health issues; however, it does not quantify risk values, and it is not intended to be the sole basis for any public health decision.

C-FERST empowers communities with online resources to help them identify and learn more about their environmental issues, and explore exposure and risk reduction options. C-FERST, developed by EPA's Office of Research and Development (ORD) in collaboration with stakeholders, is intended to serve the needs of a broad range of users, including the general public, environmental and public health professionals, state and local risk assessors, EPA community involvement coordinators and environmental justice coordinators working on local-scale issues, and academic institutions serving local communities. It may be mutually beneficial for community members and groups to work with regional, state or local environmental experts, as well as local academic institutions to identify and learn about issues, and interpret C-FERST data and results.

As targeted users of C-FERST, input from state environmental and public health agencies with their buy-in on the tool are critical to realize its full value. In August 2015, a pre-release version of C-FERST was shared with states for beta testing through the Environmental Council of the States (ECOS). In 2016, EPA ORD partnered with states through ECOS and the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO) to bring together a group of state representatives to identify any concerns about the tool and to provide feedback to EPA regarding how C-FERST can best support state programs. The states partnered with EPA ORD to develop an engagement strategy and roll out plan to help make C-FERST a more useful tool for state programs to provide to the public, and also assisted EPA ORD in placing C-FERST in the context of related environmental public health tracking tools.

The initial version of C-FERST was released at the ECOS Fall Meeting in September 2016. The tool will be periodically refined and populated with improved and updated information based on user feedback and needs.

Deliverables

- States reviewed and provided feedback on draft communications materials and proposed training approach (June/July/August 2016)
- States/ECOS/ASTHO engagement in planning for roll out and initial messaging of C-FERST (September 2016)
- C-FERST briefing for states (October 2016)
- Work with states and CDC to provide links to state resources and data related to health outcomes and non-chemical stressors for future updates to C-FERST (ongoing)

Next steps

- EPA is developing training materials and plans to hold web-based training for the states in early 2017.
- EPA plans to work with ECOS and ASTHO and other partners to identify a few early specific cases to apply C-FERST to, in order to develop some case studies that illustrate potential uses of the tool that can be repeated in other places to improve environmental and health outcomes.

For more information, find C-FERST online at:

<http://www.epa.gov/c-ferst/>