

Climate Change and Public Health

National Center for Environmental Health
Division of Environmental Hazards and Health Effects
Climate Change Program



The CDC climate change and public health framework was established in 2006, due to a recognition by many scientists that there was a need to prepare for the inevitability of climate change, and the impact it would likely have on the health of US residents and the world population in general. In FY2009, Congress appropriated \$7.5 million for CDC to formally establish its Climate Change Program. CDC's Climate Change Program leads efforts to prevent and adapt to the anticipated health impacts associated with climate change. The Program seeks to identify populations most vulnerable to these impacts, anticipate future trends, assures that systems are in place to detect and respond to emerging health threats, and takes steps to assure that these health risks can be managed now and in the future.

CDC's Climate Change Program has 3 core functions:

To analyze and translate the latest findings in climate science to our public health partners.

Priority Actions

1. Enhance the science base to better understand the relationship between climate change and health outcomes
2. Identify locations and population groups at greatest risk for specific health threats, such as heat waves
3. Provide technical advice and support to state and local health departments, the private sector, and others in implementing national and global preparedness measures related to the health effects of climate change

Projects /Activities

- Work with the state and local agencies to translate climate science into health policy for action both regionally and locally
- Expanding the climate change research foundation
- NASA/ROSES project; Using NASA data and models to improve heat watch warning systems
- Local climate change and health indicator project; Travis County, Texas
- Vulnerability assessments for climate-related environmental hazards

To apply these findings to decision support tools that will aid in the state and local public health response.

Priority Actions

1. Track data on environmental conditions, disease risks, and disease occurrence related to climate change
2. Communicate the health-related aspects of climate change, including risks and ways to reduce them, to the public, decision makers, and healthcare providers
3. Develop and implement preparedness and response plans for health threats such as heat waves, severe weather events, and infectious diseases
4. Expand capacity for modeling and forecasting health effects that may be climate-related
5. Promote workforce development by helping to ensure the training of a new generation of competent, experienced public health staff to respond to the health threats posed by climate change

Projects /Activities

- Developing the 'Climate Ready States and Cities Initiative' to support and lead initiatives to build capacity in state and city health departments to address the public health consequences of climate change.
- Funding 8 states and 2 city health departments to undertake climate change and health related assessment, planning, adaptations and capacity building.

- Funding of a Climate Module within the Environmental Public Health Tracking Network (EPHT)
- Creation of adaptation guidance for state and local health departments
- Preventing and Treating Heat Related Illness: an e-learning course
- Extreme Heat Media Toolkit

To provide leadership, within CDC and at the federal level, to ensure that the public health concerns are well represented in climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies and to create linkages between public health and efforts in other sectors.

Priority Actions

1. Provide leadership to state and local governments, community leaders, healthcare professionals, nongovernmental organizations, the faith-based communities, the private sector and the public, domestically and internationally, regarding health protection from climate change effects
2. Serve as a credible source of information on the health consequences of climate change for the U.S. population and globally
3. Develop partnerships with other government agencies, the private sector, nongovernmental organizations, universities, and international organizations to more effectively address U.S. and global health aspects of climate change

Projects /Activities

- Participation as lead authors on the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Special report on Weather Extremes, and for the Fifth Assessment Report
- Participation on Inter-Agency Workgroups of the US Global Change Research Program
- Serving as Advisor to Health Canada's Climate and Health Program.

For more information about the CDC Climate Change Program and its activities visit www.cdc.gov/climatechange.