NEW HAMPSHIRE
PUBLIC HEALTH
ASSOCIATION

Improving Health, Preventing Disease, Reducing Costs for All

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Public Health and Climate Change
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The New Hampshire Public Health Association (NHPHA) recognizes the inter-dependent relationship between greenhouse gas emissions, climate change, and public health. Over the last century the Northeast US has become significantly warmer and wetter and these trends have increased since the 1970s. A growing body of scientific evidence points to human activities, including the burning of fossil fuels, as the primary driver of a changing climate and of the observed trends of increased incidence of extreme heat and heavy precipitation events. It is important therefore, to plan and implement adaptation strategies to protect public health in addition to adopting strategies to limit the severity of the problems that will occur. Health effects related to a changing climate include: increasing risk of heat-related illness, increasing risk of food insecurity, changing patterns in vector-borne disease, risk of injury and displacement during extreme weather events, and increasing risk of cardiovascular and respiratory diseases including severe asthma in response to changing air pollutants and allergens. Although we have evidence-based public health practices to address many of these challenges, current policy tools do not adequately address the root causes through vigorous efforts to reduce greenhouse gases. We must focus on addressing root causes as well as policy changes that will support effective adaptation and build community resilience. To protect the health and safety of NH residents, we will need to pursue policy change in the following areas:

- Create new partnerships and collaborations to assess the global driving forces, and the local public health impacts, of climate change in New Hampshire;

- Protect the health and safety of all NH residents with special consideration of vulnerable populations, including the elderly, children, those with pre-existing health conditions, and lower-income communities.

- Pursue regional climate and health adaptation planning in three geographic areas: 1) the North Country and rural areas statewide, 2) the South-central and urban areas, and 3) the Seacoast and Great Bay areas. A viable framework for adaptation planning called 'Building Resilience Against Climate Effects' has been developed by CDC and is being tested in New Hampshire; and

- Pursue the mitigation of climate change through the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. We must find additional ways to reduce our dependence on fossil fuels; expand our use of alternative and sustainable energy sources.

Resources

Preparing for Climate Change: A Strategic Plan to Address the Health Impacts of Climate Change in New Hampshire (July 2010). Climate Change and Health Improvement Planning Committee. NH DHHS & DES.
http://des.nh.gov/organization/divisions/air/pehb/ehs/ehp/documents/strategic-plan.pdf

Climate Change Impacts in the United States: The Third National Climate Assessment (2014) U.S. Global Change Research Program.
Chapter 10: Human Health. http://nca2014.globalchange.gov/report/sectors/human-health
Chapter 16: Northeast. http://nca2014.globalchange.gov/report/regions/northeast

Climate Change in Southern New Hampshire: Past, Present, and Future. (2014) Climate Solutions New England Report, Sustainability Institute UNH. http://climatesolutionsne.org
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Policy Statements, NH Public Health Association
http://nhpha.org/advocacy/policy-positions