

Local Health Departments are Preparing for the Health Impacts of Climate Change

October 2017

San Francisco Department of Public Health

Project Summary



The National Association of County and City Health Officials, with funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), selected the San Francisco Department of Public Health as one of 11 local health departments (LHDs) to better understand how county and city health departments are preparing for the health impacts of climate change. The goal of this project was to highlight local efforts to prepare for and build resiliency to the health impacts of climate change and to share these success stories to support new and ongoing initiatives in other LHDs. The project sought to identify best practices and provide real-world case studies. LHDs play an important role in connecting health impacts with the effects of climate change. This project highlights only a few of the many departments actively engaged in climate change efforts.

Background

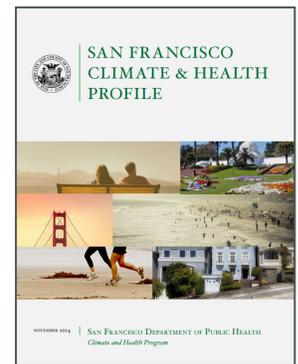
San Francisco is a dense, urban city with an estimated population of over 860,000 people.¹ The city supports 530,000 jobs and is host to approximately 17 million visitors per year. As a peninsula with a bay on one side and an ocean on the other, San Francisco is threatened by climate change more than most U.S. cities (e.g., sea level rise, storm surge).

Climate Challenge

Locally, climate change is expected to cause more variable weather, including extreme heat days and heat waves, intense storms and heavy precipitation events, sea level rise and flooding, droughts, and air pollution. These effects have significant and cascading impacts on public health. To address this challenge, the San Francisco Department of Public Health's Climate and Health Program is transforming climate change data into strategies, tools, and trainings to connect with communities to design solutions to improve health and resilience.

Goal

The goal of the San Francisco Department of Public Health's Climate and Health Program is to use cross-sector collaboration to support healthy and climate-ready communities. The health department developed several objectives to address this overarching goal and has achieved a number of successes so far.



OBJECTIVES

- Explicitly address vulnerable populations in programs and policies focused on climate health impacts with the goal of reducing health disparities;
- Inform and engage communities about the health impacts and health co-benefits associated with taking action to prepare for and reduce the effects of climate change;
- Enhance planning and preparedness for emergency response to protect the public's health against negative impacts associated with climate change-related stressors and disasters;
- Expand and enhance partnerships to ensure climate change is a recognized public health issue and provide guidance to reduce health risks and create more resilient communities; and
- Build the capacity of departmental staff and programs to monitor health impacts, integrate climate preparedness, and improve climate response.

Achievements and Successes

- Won the National Institute of Environmental Health Science's Climate Change and Environmental Exposures Challenge for San Francisco's Climate and Health Profile,^{2,3} which was also recognized by the Obama Administration, incorporated into the U.S. Climate Resilience Toolkit, and disseminated to communities and decision-makers nationally;⁴
- Selected for the global publication Cities100,⁵ the Climate and Health Program was presented at the 2015 United Nations Climate Change Conference as a concrete urban solution that can be scaled and replicated across the world;
- Developed innovative tools (e.g., heat vulnerability index and flood health vulnerability index) to address health, demographic, and environmental factors linked to climate change that help professionals respond to extreme weather events and to support climate action;^{6,7} and
- Released the Climate and Health Adaptation Framework,⁸ the first comprehensive health adaptation plan for the City and County of San Francisco that is rooted in health equity and uses a place-based, data-driven approach to assessing climate change and solutions.

References

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The mission of the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) is to be a leader, partner, catalyst, and voice with local health departments.

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