

Oregon Public Health Connection

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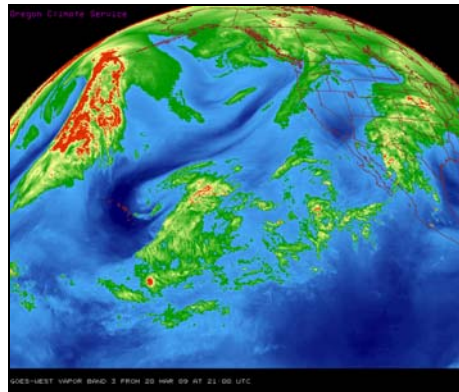
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Top Priority:

Climate Change and its Potential Impact on the Public's Health

(Editor's note: This issue of the Oregon Public Health Connection is devoted to climate change and related issues affecting the public's health. Also see the latest edition of Northwest Public Health, "Climate Change: Challenging Public Health" www.nwpublichealth.org for more regional articles on this topic.)



The enhanced infrared images display color-coded temperatures of the earth's surface or highest atmospheric cloud layer. Higher clouds have progressively lower temperatures. (Photo courtesy of the Oregon Climate Service, Oregon State University.)

By Michael Heumann
Epidemiologist,
Emergency Preparedness Planning & Occupational Public Health,
Office of Environmental Public Health,
Oregon Public Health Division, DHS

Climate scientists strongly agree that climate change is taking place at a rapid pace.¹ While there is uncertainty in the full scope of the changes and their effects, there is consensus that significant impacts to the environment will be felt around the globe. Impacts are already underway in Oregon and the Pacific Northwest and they will likely affect the public's health.²

Key elements that will most likely impact the Pacific Northwest include increasing temperatures, increasing evaporation, increasing precipitation in some areas, rising sea level, and increasing extreme climatologic incidents like winter storms, floods, landslides, wild fires and heat waves.

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Best Practices: Wasco Sherman's "Green Team" reduces carbon footprint



Wasco Sherman Public Health front office staff busy recycling! Left to right: Rocio Meda, Oscar Rodriguez, Matt Mercer. (Photo courtesy Wasco Sherman Health Department.)

Beginning in early 2008, Wasco Sherman Public Health took steps to reduce our office's carbon footprint by organizing a "Green Team." The team is composed of a cross-section of staff, including front office, nursing, environmental health, and the business manager. The team's initial task was to implement the new recycling opportunities available to businesses and offices in downtown The Dalles, which included delivery of recycling rollcarts to Public Health as well as distribution of desk-side recycling boxes to each employee. Presentations were made at monthly staff meetings about how and what to recycle.

The Green Team also looked at a variety of resource-saving and money-saving actions that could be accomplished within the office. These included using durable goods (washable plates, cups, napkins and towels) in the lunchroom; developing a multi-use cover page for faxes; stopping junk faxes; purchasing rechargeable batteries; and using natural methods to deal with weather-related temperature changes in our older building, such as closing the blinds and using fans. New employees are oriented by a member of the Green Team, which focuses on the department's efforts to reduce waste and recycle more.

For more information, contact Cindy Brown, Green Team Coordinator, CindyB@co.wasco.or.us

¹ IPCC, 2007

² Oregon State University, 2004

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Hot Topics: Public Health Hazard Vulnerability Assessments in Oregon



(Photo courtesy USGS.)

From the public health HVAs that were completed by LHDs, we learned that **natural hazards** are the category of greatest concern. 191 natural hazards were reported -- 90 were identified among the top five hazards. Natural hazards reported fell into common categories: floods, drought, heat waves, landslides, severe weather, wild fires, winter storms and geophysical hazards (earthquakes, Tsunamis and volcanoes).

The category of **human disease** was reported by LHDs as another important and perhaps unique public health concern. Pandemic flu was listed as the top threat for 11 LHDs, and 10 other counties listed it among their top five threats. Other human disease concerns included new and re-emerging infections and other disease outbreaks.

A **chemical hazard** as reported by LHDs included hazardous materials incidents, HazMat responses to a chemical release during transportation or at a fixed site, and chemicals that could be used as a weapon. There were a total of 49 mentions of a chemical hazard reported, with 17 counties listing a chemical hazard among the top threats in their jurisdiction.

Several other categories of hazards were also identified by LHDs, but much less frequently. They included terrorism, technological incidents (which can include urban fires, power outages, dam failures), mass casualty incidents and civil unrest.

At the Emergency Preparedness Program in Oregon Public Health Division, we plan to work with LHDs to find ways to support them in preparing to address their top concerns. At the state level, we are taking the information provided and using it to do an internal assessment of where our greatest vulnerabilities are in being able to respond to the hazards listed and provide appropriate support during an emergency.

For more information, contact Public Health Emergency Preparedness, <http://oregon.gov/DHS/ph/preparedness/index.shtml>

Oregon Public Health Division Launches New Environmental Health Tracking Tool

The Office of Environmental Public Health is pleased to announce the launch of the Environmental Public Health Tracking (EPHT) network. The Oregon EPHT network is a new web-based tool that brings together data and information about environmental hazards, exposures and health outcomes. Oregon is part of a larger national network of partners, including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), sixteen other states, four academic centers and one city, which is building this network to close the gap in what we know about the environment's impact on health. This network is the first of its kind in the United States. Despite mounting evidence of the effects of pollutants in our air, water, soil and food, a national environmental health surveillance system did not previously exist. Currently, the network contains information about air and water quality, childhood blood lead levels, asthma and heart attack hospitalizations and vital statistics. EPHT users can access data and information through the program's website in two ways-- either by viewing environmental health information in reports and fact sheets, or by querying and downloading the data.

The Oregon EPHT program will grow over time based on the environmental health priorities and concerns of Oregonians. In 2009, EPHT hopes to expand the current system to include web-based mapping and data based on *indicators*, which provide information about a population's health status with respect to environmental factors when clear measurable links are not available. Plans are underway to develop "built environment" indicators, explore cancer data and to assess potential health effects of changes in air quality. EPHT is also partnering with a new Health Impact Assessment initiative also within the Office of Environmental Public Health that will promote the use of data to predict the future health impacts of project and policy proposals. The goal of the EPHT network is to provide Oregonians with information that will help them make more informed decisions that will improve public health around the state. With the help of the new network and tools, citizens can begin to look at the unique issues facing their communities, researchers can use the data to generate new questions, public and environmental health professionals can improve their services and practices, the health care community can enhance patient care, and policy makers can make more informed decisions.

For more information, please visit the Oregon EPHT network website: www.healthoregon.org/epht or contact Nancy Goff, Outreach and Education Coordinator, at nancy.m.goff@state.or.us.

PH: In the News

DHS Cuts: Feeling the pain locally (Clackamas County, OR.) – Some public officials fear what will happen locally if human services are deeply slashed. Clackamas County provides most of its own human services through its county government rather than contracting out like some municipalities. (Courtesy Clackamas Review, Clackamas County, OR.)

Hearing held on health effects of field burning (Marion County, OR.) – A committee of the Oregon House recently heard more than two hours of conflicting testimony on the health effects of smoke from field burning. (Courtesy Albany Democrat-Herald, Albany, OR.)

Stem cell research funding awaits approval in Oregon (Lane County, OR.) – For Oregon legislators who have been working to position the state on the forefront of stem cell research, President Barack Obama's recently signed executive order gives hope that this could move forward. (Courtesy The Daily Emerald, University of Oregon, Lane County, OR.)

Washington County Public Health Awards: Opening Doors Program, Lisa Vincent Receive Nods (Washington County, OR.) – Washington County Department of Health and Human Services today announced the winners of their annual Public Health Awards. They are the Community Action's Opening Doors program in the organization category and Lisa Vincent in the individual category. (Courtesy Washington County Department of Health and Human Services, Washington County, OR.)

Hot Topics: Global Climate Changes and Vaccine Shipping



(Photo courtesy Douglas County Health Department.)

Information provided by the Immunization Program, Office of Family Health, Oregon Public Health Division, DHS,

At first glance, it would appear that weather changes would not affect our ability to ship vaccines between warehouse and clinic or local health department.

Experience over the last few years has demonstrated that weather changes do affect vaccine supplies. An integral aspect of shipping vaccines is the maintenance of the cold chain. Hot temperatures in the summer affect the ability to keep vaccines cool during shipping and extreme cold temperatures in the winter threaten to freeze refrigerated vaccine.

Increasingly in Oregon, there are days/weeks in the year when vaccines cannot be shipped due to extreme temperatures.

Sites storing vaccines must also be prepared for power outages and have a plan in place to protect vaccines, including taking vaccines to a location with backup power until electricity is restored. Flooding has an impact on those locations threatened with high waters.

Two years ago, one Oregon clinic saw their refrigerator, containing vaccines, float down a river of mud! Vaccines are expensive; Oregon supplied over \$30,000,000 worth of vaccines to providers across the state last year. Though we cannot plan for every contingency, it is critical that we maintain the potency of the vaccines by practicing good storage and handling procedures. Planning for the potential challenges added by climate change will help assure viable vaccines and a healthier Oregon.

Best Practices: Multnomah County Takes Steps to Address Climate Change Issues



Pictured from left to right: Kari Lyons, MCHD Environmental Health Services, George Luber, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and Nina Katovic, OHSU nursing student. (Photo courtesy Multnomah County Sustainability Program.)

Approximately thirty Multnomah County Health Department (MCHD) employees explored the topic of climate change at the first MCHD's Global Climate Change and Public Health Workshop held on February 6, 2009.

Kari Lyons from Environmental Health Services and Nina Katovic, OHSU Nursing student, organized the workshop to address the growing need for awareness about climate change, as well as MCHD's role in preparedness for and mitigation of climate change.

Dr. George Luber from CDC's National Center for Environmental Health presented data, case studies, and evidence-based practices around climate change mitigation and adaptation nationwide.

He commented that the diversity of experience in the room – colleagues from Early Childhood Services, Emergency Medical Services, Informatics Specialists, and more – is critical and essential to success at the local health department level in raising awareness and being prepared.

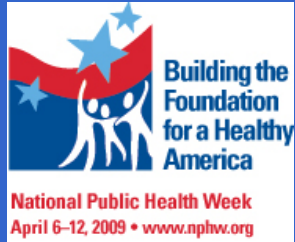
Luber emphasized that climate change is not a future health issue, but that the effects of climate change – the warming and cooling of our temperatures – are already happening.

The workshop was the first step in confronting the very real threat that climate change poses as a public health concern for Multnomah County residents. The next steps include: staying connected with the County's Sustainability Office on their work on the Local Warming Action Plan; organizing a public health team to educate, empower and inform MCHD staff on the local public health impacts of climate change; provide technical assistance to HD programs on how to increase sustainable workplace practice in partnership; and to review a draft adaptation plan to be developed over the next few years.

For more information contact Kari Lyons, Environmental Health Policy Analyst, Multnomah County Health Department @ lyonsk@co.multnomah.or.us or 503-988-3400 Ext. 25860.

PH Calendar

APRIL 2009



[Oregon Public Health Week](#)

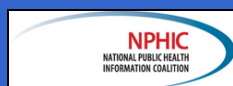
Events sponsored by a variety of partners include kick off at the State Capitol with Public Health Displays, a week-long speakers' series, a student photo contest, daily physical activities, and a one-mile walk around the Capitol kicking off the week. For more information, contact: Trish Neiworth, OPHD Community Outreach and Education, latrissa.l.neiworth@state.or.us

[Local Options for Healthy Living](#)

Local Options for Healthy Living: Chronic Disease and Cost Consequences presented by Diane Orenstein, PhD., Behavioral Scientist, Division of Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention, CDC; Justin Trogdon, PhD. Economist, RTI International (RTI); Kristina Wile, MS Sustainability Institute April 14, noon – 1 p.m. This is part of Hot Topics in Preparedness, an online forum sponsored by the Northwest Center for Public Health Practice. Registration is required.

[Summer Institute 2009](#)

Northwest Center for Public Health Practice, Aug. 2009, Seattle. You'll hear from experts in the field on crosscutting issues and trends and receive practical, case-based training from nationally renowned faculty. Registration will begin in early May.



The Oregon Public Health Connection has been recognized by NPHIC with the 2008 Bronze Award for Excellence in Public Health Communication.

Top Priority: Climate Change and its Potential Impact on the Public's Health -- from pg. 1

The Governor's Initiative on Global Warming recently produced a report, "Climate Change and Oregon," (August 2007), which predicts that Oregon will likely experience the following related to climate change:

Temperature changes: Annual average temperatures have increased 1-3° F over the last century according to the U.S. Global Change Research Program, National Assessment Synthesis Team (2001). Eleven of the 12 warmest years since temperature measurements have been recorded have happened since 1995. These temperatures are projected to continue to increase.

Rain and Snow Patterns: Rising temperatures will force faster melting of snow packs, increasing the threat of flooding. More winter precipitation may mean drier summer and fall months. With these projected changes, it is likely that less water will be available for drinking, crop and livestock production, fish habitat, industry, and recreation.

Sea Level Rise and Ocean Conditions: A global rise in the sea level is predicted in the coming century. This could threaten coastal beaches, sandy bluffs and wetlands. Salt-water intrusion could contaminate coastal aquifers; the source of drinking water for coastal populations. Changes in ocean currents are also predicted along the Oregon coast, with warmer ocean temperatures increasing the risk of shellfish contamination from marine algae species.

Forest Fires and Pests: A warmer climate and reduced water availability are projected to threaten forests accustomed to specific climate conditions. Changes in tree species would be likely, and in some areas, forests may be replaced by grasslands. Trees that are stressed will be more susceptible to pest damage, diseases and fires. This could threaten industries relying on forests and the livelihood of people living near forested areas.

Ecosystem Changes: Native plant and animal species adapted to the climate in Oregon could be impacted by rising temperatures and changing water availability. Warmer rivers and streams would threaten native fish, like salmon and trout. Warmer temperatures in lakes, reservoirs and rivers potentially increase the frequency and size of hazardous algae blooms that threaten drinking water, recreational activities and water for livestock and agriculture.

Human Health: All of these climate and environmental changes will likely threaten human health in Oregon. Some examples include: heat-related morbidity and mortality due to predicted increases in heat waves. The elderly, young children, the poor, and people with certain underlying medical conditions are especially susceptible to effects of prolonged elevated temperatures. Flooding and landslides caused by severe winter storms increase threats of injuries and death among people living in flood-prone areas. Vector borne diseases could increase due to warmer temperatures and changes in precipitation patterns. This could result in conditions favorable for increases in disease-capable species of mosquitoes and other vectors. Exposure to smoke from wild land and forest fires is directly responsible for increased risks among persons with existing respiratory conditions and cardiovascular disease.

These projections in climatic conditions in Oregon affect all aspects of our environment, economy and health. The range of public health response is clear and begins with continuing to improve our ability to detect changes in the occurrence of these illnesses and injuries. Other key public health responses include continuing to improve our ability to understand the possible associations with changes in the environment, planning to respond to observed threats, predicting patterns and degrees of change, and developing mitigation and adaptation strategies that help reduce the impact and severity of the threats, especially for vulnerable populations who would be at increased risk for harm.

Hot Topics: 2009 Living Well Annual Forum - Four Years of Success



Nearly 100 participants attended a day-long program with two plenary sessions, breakout sessions, networking and an awards ceremony. (Photo courtesy Living Well Program.)

The 4th Annual Living Well Forum was held on March 5 at the St. Charles Medical Center in Bend, OR. This annual event provides training and support to individuals and organizations that are currently implementing or are interested in the Stanford Chronic Disease Self-Management Program (called Living Well in Oregon), Tomando Control de su Salud (a Spanish language and culturally adapted version of Living Well), and/or the Positive Self-Management Program (a self-management program designed specifically for people living with HIV/AIDS).

Dr. Nancy Whitelaw, Senior Vice President of the National Council on Aging, presented the keynote address. Recipients of the 2009 Outstanding Practice Awards included Living Well in Southern Oregon for Outstanding Organization Award (received by Sharon Johnson and Bernadette Maziarski, Oregon State University Extension Services) and Marty Fobes, Benton County Health Department, for the Outstanding Master Trainer Award.

For more information:

<http://www.oregon.gov/DHS/ph/livingwell/forum09.shtml> or email living.well@state.or.us



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