



NJSOPHE - New Jersey Society for Public Health Education

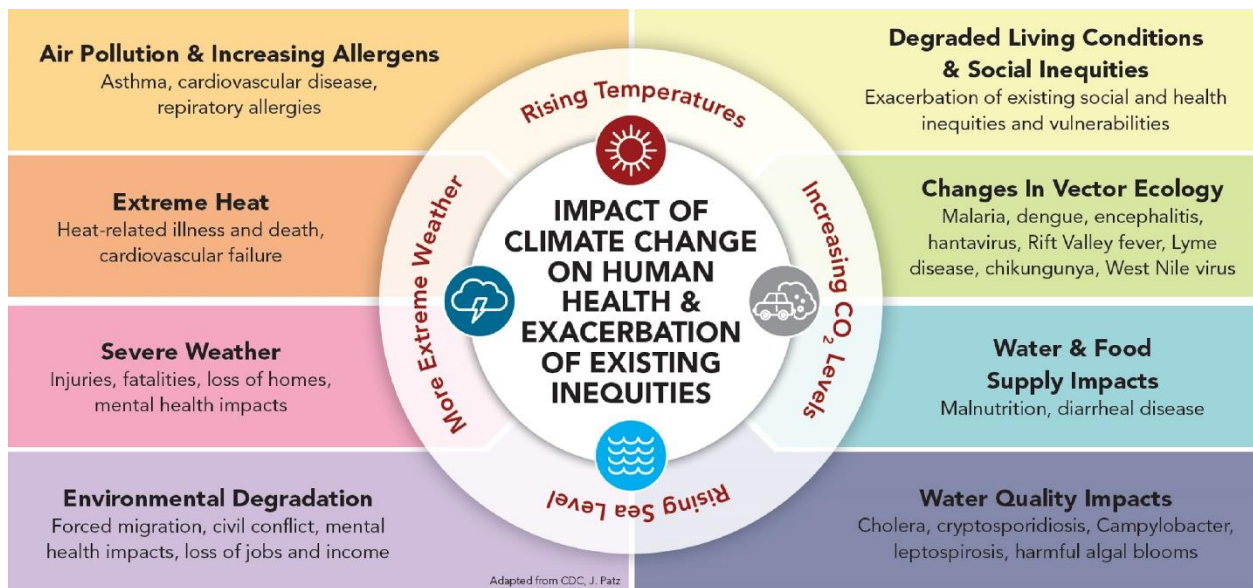
NJSOPHE is committed to promoting healthy behaviors, healthy communities, and healthy environments through our focus on prevention and public health education.

Combating Climate Change in NJ: A Public Health Approach

The connection between climate change and health has been called the greatest public health threat of our time (Watts 2015). Climate scientists agree that our planet is undergoing significant, highly problematic shifts in climate and the main cause is human activity (Melillo et al. 2014). Climate change is caused primarily by increased greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in the atmosphere which trap energy and elevate temperatures.

The Health Impact

As the climate continues to change, the risks to human health grow (USGCRP 2016). Failing to act now will not only incur greater costs but will also cause irreversible damage to our health. In 2009, the World Health Organization (WHO) reported that **climate change is responsible for 150,000 deaths each year**; they feared **this number would double by the year 2030**.



Climate Change in NJ

NJ's average annual temperatures have increased by 2.2°F since 1900	Annual precipitation in NJ has increased at a rate of 4.1" (9%) per century
The sea level in Atlantic City has risen an average of 1.5" per decade, which is double the global rate . By 2050 it is projected to rise from 0.9 – 2.1 ft	From 1980 - 2018, NJ had 42 extreme weather events with nationwide cumulative losses exceeding \$1 billion

Impact on NJ

The effects of climate change in NJ are already here. Due to warmer and wetter conditions, **disease-carrying mosquitoes and ticks** are an increased threat, lakes have been inundated by **toxic algae blooms**, fish are migrating north, shore towns are facing **increased coastal flooding**, and inland communities are experiencing **more flash flooding**. These events will become more dire as the Earth warms by 1.5° C from pre-industrial levels, which could happen by 2040. (IPCC 2019)

While climate change impacts the health of all people, **children, older adults, communities of color, and low-income communities are disproportionately affected**. Since NJ is one of the three most diverse states with respect to race, ethnicity and foreign-born populations, our residents are particularly at risk (NJDOH 2015).

What can Legislators, Public Health Workers, and NJ Residents do?

NJ has already taken positive steps to develop a Master Energy Plan with the following goals:

- 50% clean energy by 2030; 100% clean energy by 2050

We can help to support policy, programs, and education in the following areas:

1. Actions that reduce GHG emissions/slow down climate change

- Committing to electric vehicles (EV) for public transportation, offering rebates and incentives for EV purchases, providing access to public charging stations
- Supporting alternative energy sources such as solar and wind

2. Actions to help NJ residents adapt to the effects of climate change

- Installing better flood defenses, such as sea walls and increased pumping capacity
- Increasing availability and access to air conditioning and cooling stations
- Increasing monitoring and education about diseases from mosquitoes, ticks, etc.

3. Actions to improve health equity for NJ residents

- Ensuring that all residents have access to the resources and infrastructure needed to prepare and respond to climate change events
- Addressing social and economic factors such as education, employment, income, social support, and community safety that impact health and result in increased vulnerability

How can NJSOPHE Help?

Policy

Identify evidence-based prevention programs and policies that fit the needs of each community

Data Collection

Collect data, evidence, and stories to guide communities from awareness to action

Data Collection

Develop education materials for legislators, organizations, and community members

About NJSOPHE

~170 health educators who work across the state in:

- Local and State government
- Community and non-profit agencies
- Health care facilities
- Businesses
- Universities and schools

Est. 1984

Providing support to health education professionals for over three decades

Contact Us

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