



# We Need Your help!

**We would like you to tell us what you think the emerging environmental health concerns are in Utah and Nationally. Please respond by email to Emily Stembridge [estembridge@utah.gov](mailto:estembridge@utah.gov) Thank you.**

## Fall Data Submission

The Fall 2010 data submission went very well as we submitted selected ED data. Metadata submission was standardized with the launch of exclusive use of the CDC’s Metadata Submission Tool. Review and validation of the ED data was open for a couple of weeks in December and went well also. In the future we will be implementing a collaborative review/validation of the data as it becomes available. More information regarding this collaborative process will be coming soon.

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REMINDER: Spring Data Submission will be March 21-25. The data required for submission are Lead and Drinking Water. Updates will be sent out as necessary.  
*-Camille Roundy, Data manager*

## EPHT Fall Conference

The National Environmental Public Health Tracking Network’s (NEPHTN) bi-annual conference was held in Salt Lake City in September. All our team members were able to attend the conferences, which was especially nice since we had two brand new members- Camille Roundy, data manager, and Brook Dorff, health program specialist. We all learned a lot and enjoyed the informative sessions. Our team members have summarized some highlights of the conference for this newsletter.

The NEPHTN conference was a great way to become acquainted with the overall vision of National EPHT and how we fit into the big picture. It was an opportunity to meet our counterparts from across the country and learn from them. The Plenary sessions were a great review of previous goals achieved in the Tracking Network, and where the network is looking to go in the future. Overall, the NEPHTN reported that the secure portal has been integrated successfully; the metadata tool and data validation portal have both been improved and are nearing finalization; there has been growth in the Tracking Network’s previous goals of outreach and communications, and; there has been an increase in new academic partners and ability to complete data linkage projects. Some future goals for the Tracking Network include: increase the secure portals accessible data and information; focus on climate change, and; increase awareness of asthma prevalence and its direct link to the environment. (Continued on page 2)



## EPHT Fall Conference— Continued

Program Marketing and Outreach (PMO) highlighted individual state outreach efforts and lessons learned and is moving in the direction of social media outreach and evaluation.

The Standards & Network Development (SND) work group is working to find new applications and approaches to share tracking data. The Climate Change Content Work Group also met to introduce the possibility of tracking climate change data. Another group to watch is the Geospatial Work Group, which is tasked with standardizing geographic presentation and introduce new geographic functionality to the network.

Geographic information systems and geospatial analytical methods are important tools for environmental determinants of health risk and health status. As many of the tracking states moved beyond the initial push of implementing data portals with tracking data and started looking toward using those data to investigate environmental health concerns, a need for understanding and standardizing how geospatial analytical tools are applied within the tracking community was identified. While some work had been done in this area by the Geography and Locational Referencing (GLR) team of the SND work group, the focus had been on geo-referencing address data. In January 2010, a Spatial Analysis Tools and Methods (SATM) Workshop was held in Miami, Florida, resulting in a proposal that a Geospatial Workgroup be organized with teams to look beyond geo-referencing practices. This workgroup was formally organized shortly before the 2010 Fall conference in Salt Lake City. From a list of needs developed during the SATM workshop, three teams were identified and organized. The teams are the Community Mapping Team, the Visualization Guidance Team and the Linkage Team. These three teams are looking at best practices in their respective domains. Utah became part of the linkage team. The main objectives of this team are to:

- 1) Explore and document best practices for spatial data linkage. These might include methods such as identifying features within a boundary feature, identifying closest neighboring features, identifying the areas where features intersect (overlap), etc.
- 2) Identify and document decision concepts to help users identify which of the available methods would be the best (most efficient, most complete, etc.) method for them.
- 3) Identify and evaluate tools or applications that are available to help users perform these data linkages.
- 4) Identify and develop training on best practices methods and tools.



## Success Stories—Cancer Clusters

The EEP responded to several requests regarding perceived cancer clusters in Utah over the fall season. In many cases, providing statistics and additional education about cancer is sufficient to alleviate resident concerns. However, when requested, a cancer cluster investigation is conducted to determine if cancer rates in a community differ from what is expected in that area. Often, concerned residents have a particular environmental issue or industry they feel is responsible. One recent investigation involved a perceived cluster in eastern Utah where the environmental concern was fallout from nuclear testing in the 1950s. Incidence rates for cancers linked to radiation exposure were determined and compared to rates expected in the area of concern. In this investigation, no significant elevations in cancer rates were found. The perceived cluster was actually a number of different cancer types that are considered normal for the population. The results of the analysis were reported to the local health district in a timely manner.



## EPHT—In Its Second Year! (an anniversary article by CDC)

In its second year after launch, CDC's Environmental Public Health Tracking Network offers users more important data and improves our knowledge base about how the environment affects people's health. The Tracking Network is an online system you can use to find out how the environment may be affecting your health or the health of your community. You can access information about environmental hazards such as air and water contaminants and some chronic health conditions such as asthma and cancer. The most common queries conducted on the Tracking Network since its 2009 launch include asthma rates and air quality.

In a new, exciting development, CDC is now funding seven more [states](#) to build local Tracking Networks as components of the National Tracking Network. Colorado, Iowa, Kansas, Louisiana, Minnesota, South Carolina, and Vermont have joined the 16 states and New York City (NYC) already tracking and reporting environment and health data. CDC's goal is that one day all 50 states will have statewide Tracking Networks.

Another big addition to the Tracking Network is U.S. Census Bureau data on population characteristics. These data include demographic measures such as sex, age, race, and ethnicity. The data also include socioeconomic measures such as poverty, occupation, education, and income. The association between population characteristics and the environment is difficult to measure, but some research shows these factors affect a person's exposure to environmental hazards. These data allow us to better understand the factors that influence environmental exposures and human health across the United States.

Over the past year, public health officials used the state Tracking Networks to identify trends such as increased asthma and lead poisoning rates and areas at high risk of consuming contaminated drinking water. These findings inform targeted outreach efforts to educate and protect citizens in these communities and to improve our understanding of the links between exposure to environmental hazards and risk of chronic illnesses. These types of discoveries and public health actions are now faster and easier because the Tracking Network makes standardized environmental and health data available in one place.

Other important updates made to the Tracking Network throughout the past year include:

### **Reproductive health and birth outcomes**

- State Vital Records Departments, through the National Center for Health Statistics, now provide the following reproductive and birth outcomes data to the Tracking Network for all 50 states:
  - Prematurity among singleton births (births of a single baby as opposed to twins, etc.),
  - Growth retardation among singleton births, and
  - Sex ratio.

### **Air**

- Modeled air data from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency are now available to examine air quality for locations without air monitors, and to fill in the time gaps when air monitors may not be recording data.
- Two more years (2007–2008) of air data—the most recent available—were also added.

### **Cancer**

- Information is now available for 10 types of cancer in 42 states and the District of Columbia. Since the Tracking Network launch, these cancer types have been added:
  - Acute lymphocytic leukemia in children
  - Acute myeloid leukemia
  - Acute myeloid leukemia in children
  - Breast cancer
  - Chronic lymphocytic leukemia

### **Birth defects**

- Information for 12 different birth defects, including spina bifida, gastroschisis, Down syndrome, and more is available for four states. In the coming year, more states are expected to contribute birth defects data.

### **Carbon monoxide poisoning**

- Mortality data for all 50 states
- Additional years of data

### **Asthma and heart attack hospitalizations**

- Additional years of data

In the coming year, CDC will continue to add new data and tools to the Tracking Network. Expansion plans include adding data and information about climate change, the prevalence of asthma, and the built environment. To learn more, please visit the Tracking Network today: [www.cdc.gov/ephracking](http://www.cdc.gov/ephracking)

## Tracking Network Contacts

Greg Williams, Project Manager, [gregwilliams@utah.gov](mailto:gregwilliams@utah.gov)

Brittney Carver, Technical Support, [bcarver@utah.gov](mailto:bcarver@utah.gov)

Brook Dorff, Health Program Specialist, [bdorff@utah.gov](mailto:bdorff@utah.gov)

Mark Jones, Epidemiologist, [markejones@utah.gov](mailto:markejones@utah.gov)

Camille Roundy, Epidemiologist, [croundy@utah.gov](mailto:croundy@utah.gov)

Emily Stembridge, Health Program Specialist, [estembridge@utah.gov](mailto:estembridge@utah.gov)



[www.ibis.health.utah.gov](http://www.ibis.health.utah.gov)

[www.Ephtracking.cdc.gov](http://www.Ephtracking.cdc.gov)

[http://health.utah.gov/enviroepi/  
activities/EPHTP/NewEPHT/ephtpnew.htm](http://health.utah.gov/enviroepi/activities/EPHTP/NewEPHT/ephtpnew.htm)

### UTAH DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

288 North 1460 West  
Salt Lake City, Utah  
84116  
P.O.Box 142104

Phone: 801-538-6191  
Fax: 801-538-6564  
[www.health.utah.gov/enviroepi](http://www.health.utah.gov/enviroepi)



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