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ENVIRONMENTAL PUBLIC HEALTH TRACKING PROGRAM

UTAH DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

National Environmental Public Health Tracking Network (NEPHTN) Now Available

If you've wondered how environmental contaminants in your community affect your health, you can now find information online by using the Environmental Public Health Tracking Network. Developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Tracking Network is a dynamic Web site that, for the first time, provides health and environmental data in one easy-to-find location.

The Tracking Network allows scientists, health professionals, and members of the public to track environmental exposures and some non-infectious health conditions. For example, the Tracking Network lets people know the health risks possible from contaminants such as air pollution and the relationship to asthma, and lead in drinking water and how it relates to premature birth.

For decades, the United States has faced a fundamental gap in knowing how environmental contaminants affect people's health. The Tracking Network was created to close this gap by improving the nation's environmental public health surveillance. "The Tracking Network is the foundation we need to protect our health from environmental hazards, make faster research progress and help prevent chronic illnesses, such as asthma, heart disease, lead poisoning and cancer," said Michael McGeehin, PhD, director of CDC's Division of Environmental Hazard and Health Effects at the National Center for Environmental Health.

The Tracking Network can be used in many ways:

- By visiting the Tracking Network's asthma page, parents and community activists can learn about how common asthma is where they live, how it is tracked, and the role the environment plays. According to the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America, 20 million persons in the United States suffer from asthma.
- Families can access the Web site and review data and information about community water systems. Specifically, they can look at the levels of three contaminants in drinking water: nitrate, arsenic, and disinfection by-products. About 90 percent of people in the United States get their water from a community water system.

Health Conditions on the Tracking Network:

- Asthma
- Birth defects (coming soon)
- Cancer
- Carbon monoxide poisoning
- Childhood lead poisoning
- Heart attacks
- Reproductive and birth outcomes (coming soon)

Environmental data on the Tracking Network:

- Air Quality related to ozone and particulate matter
- Community water
- Well water

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NEPHT Now Available Continued

Until recently, data on health and the environment existed only in separate databases, making it difficult for health professionals to study and analyze the data. The Tracking Network is a launching pad for further research because for the first time it connects a body of environmental and health information from multiple states and national sources. Now with information they need available at their fingertips, scientists and the public can better understand connections between environmental exposures and chronic health conditions.

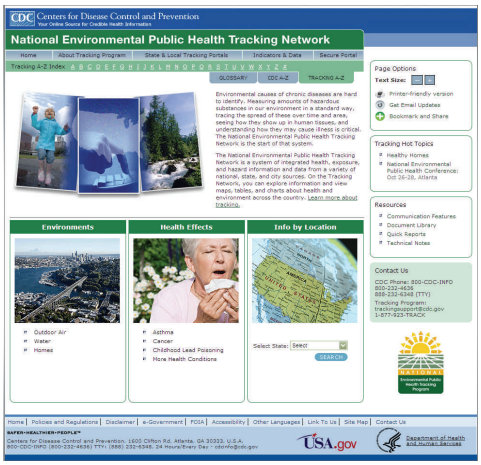
CDC funds health departments in 16 states and one city to contribute data to the Tracking Network. In addition, four federal agencies provide data and expertise for Network development:

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

National Aeronautics and Space Administration

National Cancer Institute

U.S. Geological Survey



Visit CDC's Tracking Network at www.cdc.gov/ephtracking.

For more information on other environmental public health issues, visit www.cdc.gov/nceh.

Tracking Network in the Media

Since the launch of the National Environmental Public Health Tracking Network, there has been some great media coverage. Check it out by clicking on the links below:

- YouTube video
- Wall Street Journal Article
- Health Day Article
- Forbes Article
- iHealthBeat Article
- Cardiology Today Article
- U.S. News and World Report Article

Tracking Network Success Stories

The CDC and its partners have made great strides in building an information network to guide health protection decisions. Since 2005, environmental public health tracking has led to 73 public health actions to prevent or control potential health effects from environmental exposures. These actions are focused on local concerns such as pesticide poisoning and factory emissions, and national issues such as asthma and cancer. The stories below are just a few examples of the kinds of actions that are happening in all of our funded health departments:

- The Utah Department of Health received a call from a citizen concerned about cases of cancer in his neighborhood. In the past, a similar call would have prompted a study that would have taken up to a year to complete, with most of that time spent waiting for data. In less than a day, the Utah Tracking Program was able to let this resident know that the likelihood of cancer in his area was no greater than in the state as a whole. To make this conclusion, the Utah Tracking staff used an analytic tool developed with tracking funds to conduct two independent investigations, related to space and time, of the rates of cancer centered on the citizen's residential location. This is a substantial improvement in the time and cost required for cancer investigations in the past and in the services Utah's Tracking Program is able to provide to their citizens.
- The Wisconsin Department of Health Services received questions about the level of trichloroethylene (TCE) emissions from an industrial facility. The Wisconsin Tracking Program produced data on exposure from that industrial facility. This prompted the facility's owner to voluntarily agree to changes to eliminate TCE emissions altogether. While the facility was in compliance with all applicable emission permit requirements, the Wisconsin Tracking program's data was compelling enough to encourage the owner to make improvements. This project reduced community TCE exposure. It now serves as a model for how air pollutant data can identify high-risk communities, and can translate into reduced exposure to air toxics.
- Massachusetts ranks third in the United States for prevalence of asthma. When Massachusetts Tracking staff conducted asthma surveillance and indoor quality assessments in schools, a significant association between mold/moisture and the prevalence of asthma was found. Based on tracking data, Massachusetts staff are working with school officials to correct mold/moisture problems and to enact policy changes for reducing mold and moisture in schools.

So far, Tracking Networks have been established in:

California	Connecticut	Florida	Maine
Maryland	Massachusetts	Missouri	New Hampshire
New Jersey	New Mexico	New York City	New York State
Oregon	Pennsylvania	Utah	Washington
Wisconsin			

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Promote Prevent Protect

UTAH EPHTN

Environmental Public Health Tracking Network

The Environmental Public Health Tracking Network

is the ongoing collection, integration, analysis, interpretation, and dissemination of data on environmental hazards, exposures to those hazards, and the health effects that may be related to the exposures. Our mission is to develop a state-wide, standards-based, Web-enabled tracking network information system in Utah to enable information and knowledge dissemination and improve public health in the realm of chronic diseases related to environmental factors.