

Frequently Asked Questions

Utah Environmental Public Health Tracking Network



What is the Environmental Public Health Tracking Network?

The Environmental Public Health Tracking Network (EPHTN) works to improve our health. The network tracks hazards in the environment that may be harmful to health as well as the health problems they may cause. The EPHT links this information together to provide an important picture of how health is influenced by our environment.

Environmental hazards are materials in the air, water, soil and food that are harmful to health. The network will be the first of its kind and will contain local, state and national data. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) funds the project.

The network will support the exchange of data between partners and users. It will be accessible through the Internet. Different users will have access to varied levels of data, depending on their roles and needs. This ensures sensitive data and systems will be protected and secure.

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What Will the Network Do?

The network will track environmental hazards and disease. The network is designed to link data about hazards to data about health problems. For now, the project has data about health issues like cancer, asthma and birth defects, and environmental hazards like air pollution.

CDC is also funding efforts to increase biomonitoring. Biomonitoring measures people's contact with hazardous materials in the environment. Knowing the amount of hazardous material people take into their bodies can provide better information about contact with environmental hazards.

What are the Benefits of the Network?

This information will be useful to many people. The public will be able to access indicators about health and the environment. They will be able to identify local health issues and support local public health actions. Researchers will be able to use the data to explore the risks of environmentally-related health problems. Governments can use the data to help create laws and regulations, and find areas that need the most aid. The network can also serve to help measure the impact of environmental or public health programs.



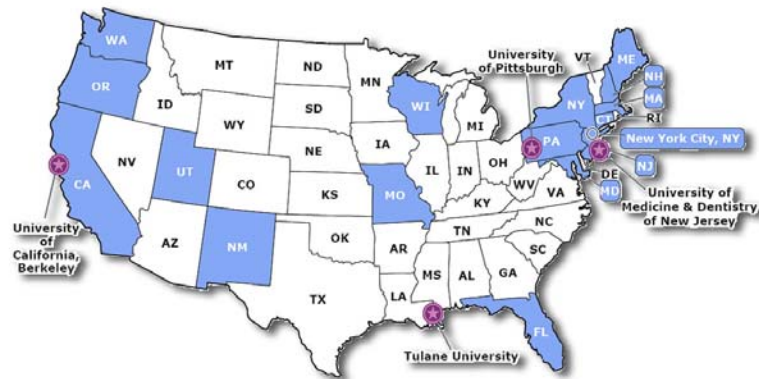
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Why Do We Need a Tracking Network?

The environment is important to our health. We know that some hazards in the environment can cause disease, but there are many other hazards with unknown health effects. Because different groups collect data on the environment and on health, the data are in different places and in different formats. This makes associations hard to study. The network will link environmental data to health data so the data can be used together.

Who is Building the Network?

CDC and others began to build the network in 2002 and are still contributing to the project. CDC is funding 16 state health departments including Utah, and four universities of public health, to design a network. Funded states and universities work with communities and other groups to identify meaningful data. CDC is also working with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) and other groups to build the network.



EPHT State and University partners

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Do Local Organizations Have a Role?

Members of local organizations are also contributing to the network. The Utah EPHTN will train local health departments and other local organizations how to use the network to investigate local environmental concerns. Partner health and environmental groups also add to the project by participating on project committees.



Where do the Data Come From?

The EPHTN relies on owners of environmental and health data to share their information. Allowing the EPHTN to access and analyze health and environmental data will help improve the quality of public health interventions. In addition, the EPHTN will be equipped with high-level data analysis and visualization and reporting tools that may be useful for data owners and others who access the network. Data owners retain control of their data on the network. Owners may share data in accordance to a use agreement with the EPHTN to determine conditions regarding the use of their data. For more information about sharing your data please contact the Utah Department of Health Environmental Public Health Tracking Project at (801) 538-6191.

Partnering Agencies

United States Geological Survey
Federal Environmental Protection Agency
Utah Department of Health, Center for Health Data
Utah Department of Health, Office of Vital Records
and Statistics
Utah Department of Health, Environmental
Epidemiology Program
Utah Population Database
Utah Birth Defects Network
Utah Cancer Registry
Utah Department of Environmental Quality,
Division of Air Quality
Utah Department of Environmental Quality,
Division of Drinking Water
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
Utah Health Information Network
Utah Health Data Committee,
Office of Health Care Statistics
Indicator Based Information Systems for Public
Health (IBIS-PH)



Utah Department of Health
Environmental Public Health Tracking Project
Office of Epidemiology
288 North 1460 West
P.O. Box 142104
Salt Lake City, Utah 84114-2104
Phone: 801-538-6191
Fax: 801-538-6564
www.health.utah.gov/ephtp

