CDC
CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION

CDC's Environmental Hazards Epidemiology Response Program

The Health Studies Branch (HSB) of CDC's National Center for Environmental Health is responsible for investigating the human health effects associated with exposure to environmental hazards and to natural and technological disasters. Its primary mission is to develop and evaluate strategies for preventing people's exposure to environmental hazards and disasters and for minimizing the effects of such exposures when they do occur. To accomplish this mission, HSB investigators conduct epidemiologic rapid response and research activities with state, local, and international health agencies.

HSB Rapid Response

- Investigating the potential health effects of exposure to dinoflagellates such as Pfiesteria in southeastern states.
- Investigated an acute renal failure epidemic in Haiti that caused the death of 99 children. Found that a local brand of acetaminophen was contaminated with highly toxic diethylene glycol.
- Investigated the extent of exposure and toxicity among users of a skin lotion containing mercury in New Mexico.
- Performed a rapid needs assessment and surveillance after Hurricane Marilyn and Hurricane Fran in North Carolina.
- Investigated the acute health effects associated with ingesting tap water containing high levels of copper in Delaware.
- Assessed the health of the population affected by tornadoes in Texas.
- Investigating several cases of lupus on the U.S.-Mexico border to see if they may be associated with environmental exposures.

Health hazards from flooding remain even after the waters have receded.

Safe drinking water is a major environmental health concern worldwide.

HSB Research Activities

- Investigating the potential health effects of sulfate in drinking water in several states.
- Determining risk factors for morbidity or mortality in areas affected by natural or technological disasters such as a Chicago heat wave that caused the death of more than 460 people, a blizzard in Pennsylvania, and flooding in Nevada.
- Identifying environmental hazards that affect populations along the U.S.-Mexico border.
- Determining the health effects of volatile organic compound exposures to Russians living along the Volga River, where oil spills frequently occur.
- Determining possible health effects among Alaskan Native women exposed to environmental chemicals that may act as endocrine disrupters.
- Measuring biological exposure levels in an Ohio community with homes sprayed with the pesticide methyl parathion.
- Determining the health effects of air pollution and lead exposure among children in Mexico City.

National Center for Environmental Health, CDC
e-mail ncehinfo@cdc.gov

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