



Environmental Health Activities in Oklahoma



NCEH in Partnership with Oklahoma

The National Center for Environmental Health (NCEH) is part of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). NCEH's work focuses on three program areas: identifying environmental hazards, measuring exposure to environmental chemicals, and preventing health effects that result from environmental hazards. NCEH has approximately 450 employees and a budget for 2004 of approximately \$189 million; its mission is to promote health and quality of life by preventing or controlling diseases and deaths that result from interactions between people and their environment.

NCEH and partners in **Oklahoma** collaborate on a variety of environmental health projects throughout the state. In **fiscal years 2000–2004**, NCEH awarded more than **\$1.1 million** in direct funds and services to Oklahoma for various projects. These projects include activities related to tracking environmental public health, helping state public health laboratories respond to chemical terrorism, and preventing childhood lead poisoning. In addition, Oklahoma benefits from national-level prevention and response activities conducted by NCEH or NCEH-funded partners.

Identifying Environmental Hazards

NCEH identifies, investigates, and tracks environmental hazards and their effects on people's health. Following are examples of such activities that NCEH conducted or supported in Oklahoma.

- **Controlling Asthma from a Public Health Perspective**—NCEH is funding the **Oklahoma State Department of Health (OSDH)** to develop asthma-control plans that include disease tracking, intervention, and occupational components. Funding began in fiscal year 2002 and continues through fiscal year 2004.
- **Environmental Public Health Tracking (EPHT)**—NCEH is funding a cooperative

agreement with **OSDH**, which developed the Oklahoma Public Health Environmental Tracking System (OK-PHETS)

in conjunction with the **Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ)**. OK-PHETS will link health data and data from OSDH surveillance systems with environmental hazard data from DEQ. The program will collaborate with the Oklahoma Central Cancer Registry and the Asthma Surveillance System.

A key objective of the Oklahoma EPHT Program is to determine whether a spatial-temporal association exists between environmental toxicants from National Priorities List/Superfund sites and incidents of neural tube defects, spinal bifida, and anencephaly. During the first stage of this program, OK-PHETS will use data from surveillance systems of the Oklahoma Lead Poisoning Prevention Program and the Oklahoma Birth Defect Registry for possible linkages with DEQ data on environmental hazards.

Measuring Exposure to Environmental Chemicals

NCEH measures environmental chemicals in people to determine how to protect people and improve their health. Following are examples of such activities that NCEH conducted or supported in **Oklahoma**.

Funding

- **Antiterrorism Funding to Increase State Chemical Laboratory Capacity**—In fiscal year 2003, CDC provided more than \$320,000 to **Oklahoma** to help the state expand its chemical laboratory capacity to prepare for and respond to chemical-terrorism incidents and other chemical emergencies. This program will provide training and technical assistance to Oklahoma on proper procedures for collecting and shipping human

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samples after a chemical-terrorism incident.

Services

- **Helping State Public Health Laboratories Respond to Chemical Terrorism**—NCEH is working with **Oklahoma's** public health laboratory to prepare state laboratory personnel for collecting and transporting human samples after a chemical-terrorism incident.
- **Blood Lead Laboratory Reference System (BLLRS)**—Two laboratories in **Oklahoma** participate in NCEH's standardization program to improve the overall quality of laboratory measurements of blood lead levels. This program helps laboratories nationwide evaluate their performance on these critical laboratory tests. NCEH provides BLLRS materials to the laboratories four times a year without charge.
- **Newborn Screening Quality-Assurance Program**—NCEH provided proficiency-testing services and dried-blood-spot, quality-control materials to monitor and help assure the quality of screening program operations for newborns in **Oklahoma**. The importance of accurate screening tests for genetic metabolic diseases cannot be overestimated. Testing of blood spots collected from newborns is mandated by law in almost every state to promote early intervention that can prevent mental retardation, severe illness, and premature death.

Preventing Health Effects That Result from Environmental Hazards

NCEH promotes safe environmental public health practices to minimize exposure to environmental hazards and prevent adverse health effects. Following is an example of such an activity that NCEH conducted or supported in **Oklahoma**.

- **Lead Poisoning Prevention**—The **Oklahoma Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program (OK CLPPP)** has received NCEH funding since 2000. In 2001, OK CLPPP screened 11,847 children for blood lead levels. The number of children under 6 years of age who had elevated blood lead levels decreased from 341 in 1997 to 147 in 2001.

OK CLPPP is using NCEH funds to develop and implement a plan to eliminate childhood lead poisoning for the state, increase targeting

screening activities, update its existing surveillance system, and increase primary prevention activities and strategic partnerships.

Resources

NCEH develops materials that public health professionals, medical-care providers, emergency responders, decision makers, and the public can use to identify and track environmental hazards that threaten human health and to prevent or mitigate exposure to those hazards. NCEH's resources cover a range of environmental public health issues, including air pollution and respiratory health (e.g., asthma, carbon monoxide poisoning, and mold exposures), biomonitoring to determine whether selected chemicals in the environment get into people and how much, childhood lead poisoning, emergency preparedness for and response to chemicals and radiation, environmental health services, environmental public health tracking, international emergency and refugee health, laboratory sciences as applied to environmental health, radiation studies, safe disposal of chemical weapons, specific health studies, vessel sanitation, and veterans' health.

For more information about NCEH programs, activities, and publications as well as other resources, contact the NCEH Health Line toll-free at 1-888-232-6789, e-mail NCEHinfo@cdc.gov, or visit the NCEH Web site at www.cdc.gov/nceh.