



ENVIRONMENTAL PUBLIC HEALTH TRACKING PROGRAM

WHAT IS THE PUBLIC HEALTH PROBLEM?

The environment plays an important role in health and human development. Researchers have linked specific diseases with exposures to some environmental hazards, such as asbestos and lung cancer. However, other links remain unproven, such as the suspected link between exposure to disinfectant by-products and bladder cancer. No systems exist at the state or national level to track many of the exposures and health effects that may be related to environmental hazards. Environmental public health tracking (EPHT) is one way to fill in these gaps. EPHT is the ongoing collection, integration, analysis, interpretation, and dissemination of data on environmental hazards; exposures to those hazards; and related health effects. The goal of tracking is to provide information that can be used to plan, apply, and evaluate actions to prevent and control environmentally related diseases.

WHAT HAS CDC ACCOMPLISHED?

In fiscal year (FY) 2002, CDC established its National Environmental Public Health Tracking Program. The program's goals are to (1) build a sustainable national EPHT network, (2) increase EPHT capacity, (3) disseminate credible information, (4) advance environmental public health science and research and (5) bridge the gap between public health and the environment. In FY 2002 and FY 2003, CDC awarded \$14.2 million and \$14.6 million consecutively to 20 state and local health departments and 3 schools of public health to (1) build environmental public health capacity, (2) increase collaboration between environmental and health agencies, (3) identify and evaluate environmental and health data systems, (4) build partnerships with nongovernment organizations and communities, and (5) develop model systems that link environmental and health data and that other states or localities can use. CDC is funding schools of public health to support state and local health departments and investigate possible links between health effects and the environment. In FY 2003, CDC also provided nine states and New York City with \$4.2 million for projects that will link environmental, exposure, and health effect data. CDC also has established a memorandum of understanding with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration and, through the Department of Health and Human Services, with the Environmental Protection Agency to promote collaboration on environmental public health tracking-related initiatives.

WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?

As additional funding becomes available, CDC plans to

- Fund additional state, local, territorial, and tribal health departments to increase their capacity building and demonstration projects
- Fund technical development activities required to support a nationwide network
- Expand training and education activities in collaboration with national and professional organizations
- Expand collaboration with national partners to coordinate technologic standards development efforts for the network

For more information about the program, visit <http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/tracking>

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