

MDHHS Division of Environmental Health Update

The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) Climate and Health Adaptation Program (MICHAP) has brought together, and framed for the State of Michigan, recent research from the International Panel on Climate Change, the U.S. National Climate Assessment, as well as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention which clearly indicate that climate change has, and will continue to amplify threats to human health; particularly for those most vulnerable. In Michigan, the climate impacts of most concern are extreme heat and heavy precipitation events. Weather data show that these extreme weather events have increased since the mid-20th century and, based on the current climate projections, those trends are likely to continue. Public health preparedness is crucial in preventing adverse health outcomes from climate impacts, which for Michigan is likely to include heat related deaths and illnesses, the spread of existing and the emergence of new water and vector-borne diseases, and injuries related to extreme weather events, flooding, and power outages.

Effectively preparing for climate impacts on human health will require a collaborative network of state and local stakeholders who can leverage their diverse sets of skills and resources to create and implement multi-level climate adaptation strategies. As such, MICHAP is working with other state agencies and local officials to better understand how current and future climate will alter the unique emergency response needs of Michigan's communities. Initially, this includes identifying the sensitivities and exposures that make each community vulnerable thereby enabling MICHAP's partners to determine the appropriate primary prevention mechanisms which can eliminate the greatest threats. Additionally, MICHAP seeks to utilize partner's expertise in managing past emergencies to consider how climate may disrupt secondary and tertiary prevention measures such as warning and communication systems during extreme weather events and access to local health and emergency services. The ultimate goal of MICHAP's inclusive and collaborative process is to build capacity at all levels to plan for and implement adaptation measures to sustain the wellbeing of all Michigan residents. For more information contact Aaron Ferguson in the Division of Environmental health at fergusona@michigan.gov.