



Climate Change:

Our Health in the Balance

Michigan's Public Health Week
April 14 - April 22, 2008

Preparedness and Extreme Weather Conditions

There is a direct connection between climate change and the health of our nation today. Children, the elderly, the poor, and people with chronic health conditions are most at risk for negative health impacts of climate change. Extreme weather (such as heat waves, tornadoes, hurricanes, or rain) caused by climate change can increase the risk of death and disease.

What You Should Know

- According to the National Weather Service, Michigan is among a group of states most at risk for severe weather disasters such as thunderstorms, lightning, river floods, lake effect weather, ice storms, heat waves and blizzards.
- Heat ranks among the top weather-related killers in the United States, responsible for more deaths than hurricanes, lightning, tornadoes and floods combined.
- Of the major American cities, New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, Detroit, and St. Louis have experienced the most fatalities during recent heat waves.
- In 2006, the National Weather Service issued 10 Flash Flood Warnings and 38 Flood Warnings across the state of Michigan. There were no deaths or injuries from the flooding, but the floods caused over \$2 million in economic and property damage.
- Carbon monoxide killed at least 14 people in Michigan in 2007.
- An average of 16 tornadoes occur in Michigan each year.
- According to the Michigan Department of Community Health, 37 people in Michigan died due to the exposure to the cold in 2006.

LOCAL AND NATIONAL RESOURCES AVAILABLE

Michigan Prepares

<http://www.michigan.gov/prepare>

MI Committee for Severe Weather Awareness

<http://mcswa.org/default.aspx>

Michigan State Police

Citizen Awareness and Family Preparedness

<http://www.michigan.gov/msp/0,1607,7-123-1593-3507-57786--,00.html>

United States Government

Prepare for Severe Weather

<http://www.usa.gov/Topics/weather.shtml>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Natural Disasters & Severe Weather

<http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/>

National Weather Service

<http://www.nws.noaa.gov/>

What You Can Do

Flood preparedness

- Learn about your community's emergency plans, warning signals, evacuation routes, and locations of emergency shelters.
- Plan and practice a flood evacuation route with your family. Ask an out-of-state relative or friend to be the "family contact" in case your family is separated during a flood. Make sure everyone in your family knows the name, address, and phone number of this contact person.
- Identify potential home hazards and know how to secure or protect them before the flood strikes. Be prepared to turn off electrical power when there is standing water, fallen power lines, or before you evacuate. Turn off gas and water supplies before you evacuate. Secure structurally unstable building materials.
- For drains, toilets, and other sewer connections, install backflow valves or plugs to prevent floodwaters from entering.
- Anchor fuel tanks which can contaminate your basement if torn free. An unanchored tank outside can be swept downstream and damage other houses.
- Learn about the difference between flood watches and flood warnings.
- Build a disaster supply kit.

Tornado preparedness

- When there are thunderstorms in your area, turn on your radio or TV to get the latest emergency information from local authorities. Listen for announcements of a tornado watch or tornado warning.
- Learn about the tornado warning system of your county or locality. Most tornado-prone areas have a siren system.
- Take a few minutes with your family to develop a tornado emergency plan. Sketch a floor plan of where you live, or walk through each room and discuss where and how to seek shelter.
- Show a second way to exit from each room or area. If you need special equipment mark where it is located.
- Learn the emergency dismissal policy for your child's school.
- Make sure your children know-- What a tornado is, what watches and warnings are, and what county or they live in.
- Buy a weather radio.

Winter weather

- Prepare for a winter storm before it hits. This is the best way to keep your family and yourself safe. Plan ahead: prepare your house and car; stock up on emergency supplies.
- Have a week's worth of food and safety supplies. If you live far from other people or grocery stores, have more supplies on hand.
- Make sure you have a battery-powered radio in case of power failure.
- Keep a water supply. Extreme cold can cause water pipes in your home to freeze and sometimes break.
- Have at least one heat source in case the power goes out; either a fireplace with plenty of dry firewood, a gas log fireplace, or a portable space heaters or kerosene heaters.
- Do not use fuel-powered heaters (such as kerosene) in unvented areas. Open a window or a door.
- Check on your neighbors to see that they are OK.
- Dress appropriately for the weather.
- Do not put too much strain on your body such as excessive snow shoveling.
- Learn about winter weather watches and warnings.

Partners in Planning

- ☼ Michigan Department of Community Health ☼ Michigan Association for Local Public Health ☼
- ☼ Michigan Environmental Council ☼ Michigan Public Health Association ☼
- ☼ Michigan Public Health Institute ☼ Michigan State University ☼
- ☼ University of Michigan School of Public Health ☼

