

**MINNESOTA PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION
POLICY RESOLUTION**

Approved at June 15, 2021 Annual Business Meeting via Zoom poll vote

Impact of Climate Change on Health

Climate change is one of the greatest threats to public health and requires renewed efforts to expand policies that increase actions to reduce harmful health and ecological impacts. Climate change threatens the very foundations of human health and wellbeing, with the Global Risks Report registering climate change as one of the five most damaging or probable risks every year for the past decade.¹

WHEREAS, beyond the obvious forms of climate change—from, extreme heat, hurricanes, drought, wildfires, and tsunamis to biological threats such as vector-borne diseases—the effects of climate change are pervasive and impact the very food, air, water, and shelter society depends on, extending across every region of the world¹; and

WHEREAS, climate change is worsening stark and persistent health inequities which interact with existing social, environmental, and economic inequalities¹; and

WHEREAS, those who disproportionately bear the health impacts of climate change in Minnesota include: children, seniors, pregnant women, low-income communities, communities of color, , people with disabilities and people with chronic disease^{2 3}; and

WHEREAS, atmospheric influences such as increases in greenhouse gas emissions, ambient temperatures, precipitation, and humidity cause disruptions in human environment that threaten the health and vitality of human communities⁴; and

WHEREAS, in Minnesota, the most concerning impacts of climate change include injury and death from extreme weather events including heat waves and floods, disease from changing tick and mosquito populations, illness from drinking or swimming in contaminated water from increased runoff and floods, respiratory and cardiovascular impacts from increases in wildfires, ozone, fine particulate matter, pollen, and mold, and mental health impacts from experiencing an extreme weather event or from a loss of sense of place⁵; and

WHEREAS, climate change stresses our health care infrastructure and delivery systems . There⁶ is a pressing need to prepare for potential health risks⁷; and

WHEREAS, extreme weather patterns destabilize communities, increase economic stress and poverty, reduce access to essential healthcare, and increase risk for mental health concerns, such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), depression, anxiety, aggressive behavior, and relationship and social unrest^{8 9 10}; and

WHEREAS, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) recommends a global goal of net zero carbon emissions by 2050 to prevent the worst effects of climate change, which include increases in heat-related morbidity and mortality and ozone-related mortality, as well as, increases in vector-borne disease and heat waves amplified by urban heat island effects;¹¹ and

WHEREAS, as public health professionals, we are best poised to prevent, detect and manage the health implications of climate change. We need to be the leading voice in advancing climate change strategies and interventions that have co-benefits for all.¹²

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Minnesota Public Health Association

1. Calls on policy makers and state and local leaders to integrate climate change solutions and climate justice into all relevant federal, state, and local public health systems and programming and to adopt policies and programs to create an equitable and just transition to a 100% carbon-free economy by 2050; and
2. Urges for a just transition away from the use of coal, oil, and natural gas to clean, safe, and renewable emergency and energy efficiency; and
3. Supports leadership by the Minnesota Department of Health, the University of Minnesota system schools, and other entities to study, analyze, provide data and recommendations, training, technical assistance, and funding in support of efforts to address the negative impacts of climate change on state and local communities; and
4. Take bold and timely action to promote awareness of environmental injustices that harm historically oppressed communities, undermine tribal sovereignty, disadvantage poor neighborhoods, and worsen the effects of climate change; and
5. Supports the funding of climate-health risk assessments, expanded disease surveillance systems, early warning systems, and research on climate and health to strengthen Minnesota's capacity for an effective health response to climate threats; and
6. Adopts an interdisciplinary and inter-professional approach to addressing climate change, including collaborations with other scientific, professional, and community organizations in Minnesota based on scientific evidence and public health expertise; and
7. Pledges to help its members and other stakeholders readily access resources regarding climate change from credible sources, including the American Public Health Association, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, as well as organizations named above.

References

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