

Governor Phil Murphy

New Jersey's State-Specific Climate Science Report Adds Chapter to Help Inform and Prepare Residents for Health Impacts Associated with Climate Change

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TRENTON – The Murphy Administration today announced that New Jersey is among the first states to produce a comprehensive report on the impacts of climate change on human health and communities by adding a human health supplement to its New Jersey Scientific Report on Climate Change (<https://www.nj.gov/dep/climatechange/data.html>). According to the State's Human Health and Communities Addendum, (<https://nj.gov/dep/climatechange/docs/nj-scientific-report-human-health-addendum.pdf>) released today in conjunction with the start of Climate Week, climate change will have direct, indirect, and wide-ranging influences on human health, such as exacerbating respiratory conditions and cardiovascular disease in vulnerable populations, causing heat-related stress, increasing the risk of diseases borne by mosquitoes and ticks, increasing the frequency of pathogen contamination of food and water supplies, and increasing mental health stressors.

"As we enter Climate Week, these crucial findings underscore our greatest concerns regarding the consequences of the worsening climate crisis," said **Governor Phil Murphy**. "In addition to inhibiting economic growth and inflicting property damage, climate change will also result in severe, wide-ranging, and long-lasting effects on the physical and mental health of our residents, especially in already vulnerable communities. While we develop a fuller understanding of these significant repercussions, we must ensure that all New Jerseyans are aware of these potential impacts and equipped with the tools and resources necessary to face them."

"Climbing temperatures, more frequent intense rainfall, and rising sea levels are all well-known consequences of climate change that are impacting New Jersey today and will worsen in the years ahead," said **Commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection Shawn M. LaTourette**. "Just as climate change is impacting our landscape and economy, so too can it have adverse effects on public health. Our work to explain and raise awareness of these risks is yet another step the Murphy Administration is taking toward a more informed and climate-resilient New Jersey."

"Air-borne allergens, such as pollen and molds, are likely to cause greater allergy and asthma symptoms, and infectious diseases spread by ticks and mosquitoes, as well as microorganism contamination of food and water supplies are expected to occur more frequently," said **Commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Health Judith Persichilli**. "It is important to arm ourselves with a solid scientific foundation to take steps that are important to protecting our health and mental well-being."

Extensive research shows that warmer winters, longer heat waves, heavier rains, flooding along inland streams and rivers, and more tidal flooding along the coast are all predicted to endanger public health and safety, destroy property, undermine critical infrastructure, and harm New Jersey's economy, including the thriving tourism industry supported by our treasured shore and lake communities. The addendum adds important human health context, shedding light on the public health concerns brought on by climate change and helping direct the State's comprehensive strategy to proactively plan and prepare for the climate change impacts.

This addendum will provide the information that people, businesses, and government entities across the state need to better understand how climate change will impact human health and communities in New Jersey. Moreover, this addendum will inform future iterations of the 2021 New Jersey Climate Change Resilience Strategy (<https://www.nj.gov/dep/climatechange/resilience-strategy.html>), particularly Priority 1: Build Resilient and Healthy Communities.

Key findings of the New Jersey Scientific Report on Climate Change Health Addendum:

1. The extreme weather events predicted for New Jersey, including heat waves and heavy precipitation, can lead to both immediate and long-term effects on cardiovascular, respiratory, gastrointestinal, and mental health.
2. Climate change is anticipated to worsen air quality from both natural and human-made sources, which may lead to greater instances of cardiovascular disease, respiratory illnesses, and cancers in vulnerable populations.
3. Infectious diseases spread by arthropods (such as ticks), insects, and microbial contamination of food and water supplies are expected to become more prevalent as climate change exacerbates the environmental conditions that are more favorable for pathogens and their hosts.
4. Population displacement resulting from sea-level rise, flooding events, and resource insecurity may add to the cumulative detrimental effects of climate change on mental health as individuals cope with the environmental and personal consequences of climate change.
5. Climate change will act as a threat multiplier for Environmental Justice communities, exacerbating existing stressors such as air pollution while adding new threats such as infectious diseases. These communities are also more vulnerable to the effects of extreme weather events, as they may lack adequate infrastructure, health, income, and resources to prepare for and recover from natural disasters. Food insecurity is worsened by climate injustices, which increase the already high frequency of chronic illnesses in impoverished areas.

The Murphy Administration stresses that adapting to climate change will be multi-faceted as evidenced by the health addendum. However, it notes that there are many actions the public can take to become better informed and prepared.

The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection and the New Jersey Department of Health recommend that members of the public:

1. Get air quality alerts sent directly to your mobile device or email by signing up for EnviroFlash (<https://www.enviroflash.info/>) and use that information to plan safe and healthy outdoor physical activity for you and your family.
2. Learn how your school and summer/sports camps can participate in New Jersey's Air Quality Flag Program (<https://dep.nj.gov/njaqflagprogram/>) for alerts on local air quality forecasts so they can take actions to protect children, especially those with asthma.
3. Learn to spot the signs and symptoms of mosquito- and tick-borne diseases through NJDOH's Fight the Bite, NJ! program (<https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/topics/vectorborne.shtml>) and seek medical help when necessary.

4. Learn to recognize and prevent heat-related symptoms (<https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/heatstress/heatillness.html>) and illness by staying cool and hydrated and limiting time spent outside during heat advisory days, particularly when the daily heat index for your area exceeds 80 degrees F.
5. Check on friends, family members, and pets regularly to make sure they are okay during heat waves and other natural disaster events.
6. Visit your municipal or county website for an updated list of cooling centers in your community.
7. Learn how to increase your resilience to flooding by purchasing flood insurance, making an emergency 'Go Kit,' (<https://www.nj.gov/njoem/plan-prepare/your-kit-plan.shtml>) and using the Local Planning for Climate Change Toolkit (<https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/9daab51c2f5542969d50437522e012c4>).
8. Encourage your town to participate in the NFIP's Community Rating System (<https://www.fema.gov/floodplain-management/community-rating-system>) so that residents can get up to a 45% premium reduction on flood insurance.
9. Understand the potential future impacts of climate change on coastal communities when purchasing property by reviewing publicly available flood maps and consider selling eligible vulnerable properties to the DEP's Blue Acres program.

Find more information and tips at <https://www.nj.gov/dep/climatechange/action.html>
(<https://www.nj.gov/dep/climatechange/action.html>)

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