



Building Capacity: Los Angeles County Department of Public Health

The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (LADPH) is the largest local health department in the nation, servicing over 10 million extremely diverse residents. LADPH appears to be unique among local health departments as it has employed a full-time staff member dedicated to coordinate the department's climate change and health efforts since 2014.

The first activities of the LADPH Climate and Health program focused on education and planning. In collaboration with the University of California Los Angeles Fielding School of Public Health, LADPH sponsored a sixteen week workshop series, open to all staff, that provided a comprehensive overview on climate and health, and offered staff an opportunity to brainstorm about how LADPH could expand its work on climate change and released a public-facing report on [Your Health and Climate Change](#). The department also [developed a Five Point Plan to Reduce the Health Impacts of Climate Change](#), which established 5 key priorities: 1) inform and engage the general public about the nature of climate change and the health co-benefits associated with taking action to reduce carbon emissions, 2) promote local planning, land use, transportation, water, and energy policies that reduce carbon emissions and support the design of healthy and sustainable communities, 3) provide guidance on climate preparedness to local government and community partners to reduce health risks and create more resilient communities, 4) build the capacity of departments staff and programs to monitor health impacts, integrate climate preparedness, and improve climate response, and 5) adopt best management practices to reduce carbon emission associate with department al facilitate and internal operations.

In 2015, LADPH sought to expand its climate change work through more intentional engagement of senior management and formation of a cross-department Climate and Health Workgroup. Staff met with 19 LADPH executive staff who were engaged in discussions on how their divisions and programs were addressing climate change, how they could enhance those activities, and who they would nominate for the workgroup. In June 2016, a 22-member intradepartmental workgroup was established with representatives from the public information office, operations/facility management, chronic disease prevention and health promotion, environmental health and emergency preparedness, nursing, veterinary health, communicable disease control, health assessment and epidemiology, children's medical services, and women's health. Over the course of the next year, the workgroup identified 25 specific objectives based on the overarching Five Point Plan, guiding the work described below.

The Climate and Health Program also worked with an interagency group to address urban heat islands. LADPH has chaired a multi-agency intersectoral Healthy Design Work Group since 2012. That group created the LA Climate Committee—chaired by LADPH and comprised of Beaches and Harbors, Internal Services, Fire, Parks and Recreation, Public Works, and Regional Planning, specifically to develop an urban heat island reduction plan. [The Urban Heat Island Reduction Plan](#) outlines four strategic areas: 1) expand and maintain the urban forest, 2) promote cool roofs, 3) increase urban green space, and 4) promote cool and permeable pavements. Simultaneously, the Committee is also developing an outreach strategy to gain feedback and buy-in for the Plan from key stakeholders.

From 2017 to 2018 the Climate and Health Workgroup developed an Extreme Heat response Framework that outlines objectives and strategies that improve the department’s preparedness and response for extreme heat, in order to help protect the public from the health impacts of extreme heat events. The strategies within the Framework reflect the importance of increasing accessibility to information and resources for vulnerable populations. For example, “Objective 1: Target Vulnerable Populations” includes strategies such as “1.2 Partner with organizations serving vulnerable persons to disseminate heat safety information and best practices.” Other strategies address accessibility and distribution of cooling centers.



Through a partnership with the LA Department of Parks and Recreation’s [Parks After Dark](#) program, set up booths at Parks After Dark resource fairs to engage with community members about extreme heat and distribute information about extreme heat resources such as maps to nearby cooling centers. Complementary to this community engagement effort, LACDPH published [two articles](#) in the physician newsletter, Rx for Prevention, on climate change, health, and the role of providers.

Future Work and Lessons Learned

Based on the robust foundation of internal capacity building, the LACDPH plans to expand their reach to more robustly engaging with the County’s Board of Supervisors. In Summer 2018, LACDPH plans to deliver customized climate change and health presentations to each Board office in order to convey the specific climate, health, and equity impacts for unique populations and constituents.

Additionally, LACDPH plans to continue to engage in the Parks After Dark program to enhance the community engagement process regarding extreme heat.

KEY ACTION STEPS:



- Develop a climate and health training or workshop for LHD staff to increase interest and capacity within the LHD. See [LADPH workshops sessions](#).
- Seek input from LHD leadership and staff to assess current climate and health knowledge and identify potential entry points for climate and health work
- Implement a climate and health work group with participation across LHD programs.
- Develop a plan that includes actionable steps for each LHD program/division to implement in order to meet shared goals
- Collaborate with other county agencies to identify venues and events for public outreach regarding climate and health.

Learn More

- [Los Angeles County Environmental Health Division - Climate Change and Health](#)
- [Los Angeles County Climate and Health Workshops \(LA Regional Collaborative for Climate Action and Sustainability\)](#)
- [Los Angeles County CalBRACE Climate and Health Profile](#)
- [California Department of Public Health's LACDPH Case Story](#)