

From Surveillance to Engagement: Maricopa County Department of Public Health

Maricopa County Department of Public Health (MCDPH) engaged with diverse partners to host a series of workshops, Bridging Climate Change and Public Health, elevating the health and equity impacts of climate change for numerous partners.

Maricopa County might be considered “heat central” in the U.S. Phoenix, the largest city in the county, has an average of 110 days with temperatures over 100°F and 19 days over 110°F. Average daily temperatures in the Southwest are projected to rise 2.5–8°F by 2100. Maricopa County Department of Public Health (MCDPH) conducts surveillance of heat illness, including syndromic surveillance. From 2006 to 2014, Maricopa County experienced 691 heat-associated deaths. A 2015 rapid epidemiologic assessment of households revealed that although 95% of residents have central air conditioning, high electricity and maintenance costs prevent many from using it.

MCDPH maintains public cooling centers and hydration stations throughout heat season, and partners with community organizations to promote their use and warn the public about heat risks. Although the 2015 [Maricopa County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan](#) identified the likelihood of increased intensity and duration of extreme heat days due to climate change, MCDPH did not refer to climate change in its public communications on heat.

MCDPH recognized that the homebound population is exceptionally vulnerable to extreme heat, and in early 2016 launched a project to assess their needs. In partnership with the Area Agency on Aging, the City of Phoenix Home Delivered Meals program, Arizona State University (ASU), and Maricopa County Human Services Department, MCDPH created a survey that was distributed to homebound individuals by meal delivery staff. Of the 1300 surveys distributed, 472 people responded. The survey identified the need to increase awareness of heat-related services, simplify the process for obtaining services, and make transportation to cooling centers more accessible for homebound individuals.

From Surveillance to Community Engagement

In November 2016, MCDPH convened a wide array of stakeholders for the first “Bridging Climate Change and Public Health” summit. MCDPH presented the results of the homebound survey and information on impacts of climate change on extreme heat and health. With 45 participating organizations, it set the stage for further discussion about collaborative efforts to address the challenges of climate change. Staff found a very high level of receptivity to the discussion. *“Most importantly, we no longer hesitate to use the term climate change—it has proven to be much more acceptable in our community than we had anticipated.”*

Following a second summit in May 2017, MCDPH convened stakeholders to develop a formal [Bridging Climate Change and Public Health Strategic Plan](#) for Maricopa County. In a series of three meetings, community partners identified five strategic directions, including:

- Celebrate incremental success and climate and health champions.
- Promote community awareness and public education about climate and health.
- Foster environmental and climate action for a healthier community.
- Coordinate research and collaborative efforts to catalyze change.
- Develop a strategic and targeted communication plan.

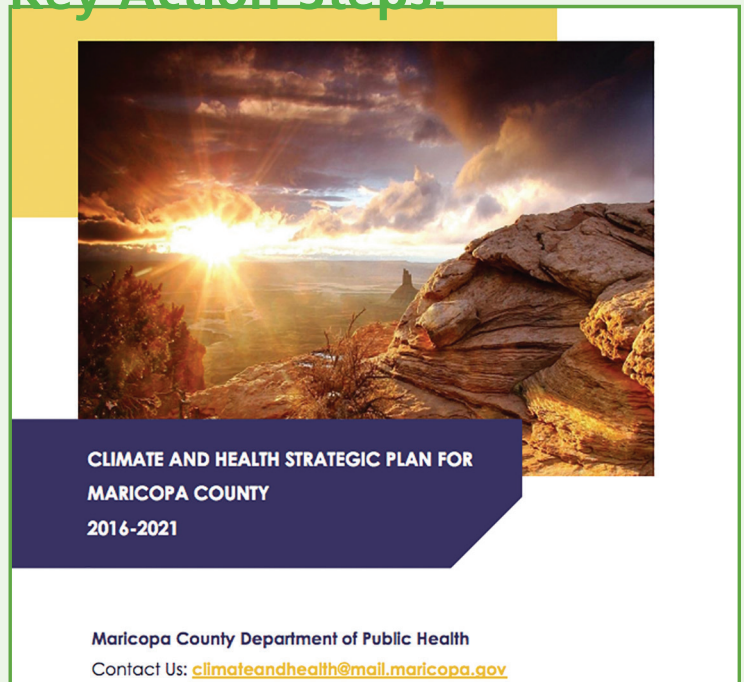
Future Work

MCPDH has received funding from the Arizona Department of Health Services Building Resilience Against Climate Effects (BRACE) program that will be used to implement the first Strategic Plan action step. Celebrating Success and Champions, will recognize Climate and Health Champions—local youth, citizens, schools, organizations, or businesses that are implementing sustainable solutions and/or ecofriendly practices or policies that promote health in the face of climate change. MCDPH sees the recognition of positive action as one more way to spread awareness about climate and health in Maricopa County.

Learn More

- [Bridging Climate Change and Public Health Strategic Plan](#)
- [Bridging Climate Change and Public Health](#)
- [Maricopa County Heat Surveillance](#)

Key Action Steps:



- Conduct surveillance on climate-related health impacts.
- Identify a vulnerable population of focus and work with diverse partners to more effectively reach that population, including assessing climate-related health needs.
- Utilize surveillance results to engage the public on climate and health.
- Host a summit or workshop to talk about climate, health, and equity connections; provide a structure for community and stakeholder input to identify actions to protect health.
- Develop a Climate and Health Strategic Plan with other local agencies and stakeholders.