



Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

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## Press Release

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### *Revolutionary Environmental Health Tracking Tool designed to help improve and protect our nation's health*

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention announced today the launch of the Web-based Environmental Public Health Tracking Network, a surveillance tool that scientists, health professionals, and – for the first time – members of the public can use to track environmental exposures and chronic health conditions.

“The ability to examine many data sets together for the first time has already resulted in faster responses to environmental health issues. We believe the Tracking Network holds the potential to shed new light on some of our biggest environmental health questions,” said Howard Frumkin, M.D., M.P.H., DrPh., director, of CDC’s National Center for Environmental Health.

The web-based tool unites vital environmental information from across the country, including air and water pollutants and information for some chronic conditions, including asthma, cancer, childhood lead poisoning and heart disease into one resource.

While scientists know exposures such as air particle pollution and lead contribute to illnesses, many environmental and health connections remain unproven since detailed health and environmental data existed in separate silos until now.

“The Tracking Network is the foundation we need to make better environmental health decisions and help prevent chronic illnesses, such as asthma, cancer, and heart disease,” said Michael McGeehin, Ph.D., director, Division of Environmental Hazard and Health Effects of CDC’s National Center for Environmental Health.

CDC funds projects in California, Connecticut, Florida, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Missouri, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Utah, Washington, Wisconsin, and New York City.

To date, their projects have led to 73 public health actions to control potential illnesses from environmental exposures. For example, the Utah Department of Health received a call from a citizen concerned about cases of cancer in his neighborhood. In the past, a similar call would have prompted a study that would have taken up to a year to complete, with most of that time spent waiting for data. In less than a day, the Utah Tracking Program was able to let this resident know that the likelihood of cancer in his area was no greater than in the state as a whole.

Massachusetts ranks third in the United States for prevalence of asthma. When Massachusetts Tracking staff conducted asthma surveillance and indoor quality assessments in schools, a significant association between mold/moisture and the prevalence of asthma was found. Based on tracking data, Massachusetts staff are working with school officials to correct mold/moisture problems and to enact policy changes for reducing mold and moisture in schools.

In March 2009, CDC received additional funding from Congress to expand environmental public health tracking to five more locations. Awards will be made and announced later this summer. Over time, CDC hopes to expand the Tracking Network across all 50 states, and track additional environmental hazards and health conditions to build a more complete picture of environmental public health.

CDC’s Tracking Network is the result of collaboration with 17 local and state health departments; federal partners, including the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, the National Cancer Institute, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Geological Survey; and organizations including the American Public Health Association, Association of State and Territorial Health Officials, Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists, National Association of County and City Health Officials, National Environmental Health Association, National Association of Health Data Organizations and the National Association for Public Health Statistics and Information Systems.

For more information please visit the Tracking Network at [www.cdc.gov/ephtracking](http://www.cdc.gov/ephtracking). Watch the YouTube video at

<http://www.youtube.com/user/CDCStreamingHealth>.

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