

Table of Contents

This newsletter helps us communicate about important activities and upcoming events. This issue includes: news about Environmental Public Health Tracking (EPHT) activities; news about EPHT; a spotlight on our Grantees and other Partners; updates about our workgroups and committees; and events of significance to EPHT.

In the News

Publications, new Web sites, and more page 2

Spotlight - New EPHT Academic Partners for Excellence

CDC expands academic partnerships by funding four Academic Partners for Excellence (APEX) in EPHT page 2

Our National Partners

ASTHO and NACCHO facilitated a series of discussions about Tracking page 3

Workgroups/Committees Update

Activities from each workgroup and committee are highlighted page 3

Talk to Tracking

EPHT Listserv, EPHT Mailbox page 5

Events

Mark your calendars page 5



In the News

Florida in geographic information systems publication

CDC's National Environmental Public Health Tracking (EPHT) Program Grantee Florida is featured in the September 2006 issue of *Public Health GIS News and Information* (No. 66, p. 13). The article is entitled "A Procedure for Disease Mapping: Bayesian Models and GIS." *Public Health GIS News and Information* is a bimonthly, electronic report dedicated to scientific excellence and advancement in disease control and prevention through the use of geographic information systems (GIS) technology.

- Direct link to issue: <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/gis/cdcgis66.pdf>
- More information about this publication: http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/about/otheract/gis/gis_publichealthinfo.htm

Connecticut Launches New EPHT Web site

The Connecticut Department of Public Health has unveiled its new Web site devoted solely to the Connecticut EPHT Program. You can check it out at: <http://www.ct.gov/ctepht/site/default.asp>

NYC launches new community HANES Web site

The New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene has posted a Web site that provides "how-to" information for the community Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (HANES). The site has the final draft of the *Designing and Implementing a Community HANES: The New York City Experience* operations manual, with links to methodological, operational, and procedural supporting documents.

To access the site, visit: <http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/html/hanes/howto.shtml>

PHASE Published

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and the New York Department of Health recently published an article in the *WIT Transactions on Ecology and the Environment*, Vol. 85, *Environmental Exposure and Health*. The article, titled "Relating Air Quality and Environmental Public Health Tracking Data," discusses some initial results from the Public Health Air Surveillance Evaluation (PHASE) project. You can view the abstract at: <http://library.witpress.com/pdfs/abstracts/EEH05/EEH05005AU.pdf> and order the article at: http://library.witpress.com/pages/listpapers.asp?q_bid=338&q_subject=Ecology

Policy Updates

New York City EPHT

The work of New York City's EPHT program has successfully influenced a change in local regulatory and legislative public health policy. The New York City Council introduced Local Law 36, which requires notification of neighbors before lawn care pesticide applications on private property, and Local Law 37, which requires city government to begin to reduce its use of the most hazardous pesticides. EPHT played central roles in negotiating these bills. It provided data from its tracking effort and indicator projects to legislators, to city agencies, and to the mayor's office to promote sound policy. New York City has now become the largest municipality to implement governmental pesticide use reduction laws. EPHT is handling implementation and surveillance activities attached to these two laws. The surveillance requirements written into the law will support the goals of EPHT for many years to come.

NOTE: If you would like something included the next edition of the *Quarterly Tracker*, please e-mail EPHT@cdc.gov. 📧

Spotlight - New EPHT Academic Partners for Excellence

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has awarded more than \$8 million over 5 years to fund four Academic Partners for Excellence in Environmental Public Health Tracking (EPHT). With these grants, CDC plans to foster scientific advances that move the nation toward improved environmental public health surveillance and response capacity for development of the National EPHT Network. Grants were awarded to Tulane University; the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey; the University of California, Berkeley; and the University of Pittsburgh. The grants are part of a larger CDC program, the National EPHT Program, that is designed to provide information from a nationwide network of integrated health and environmental data that drives actions to improve the health of communities.

"CDC's National Environmental Public Health Tracking Program is building a national integrated environmental and public health information system that supports national efforts to standardize and facilitate the electronic exchange of information. Linking environmental and health data will enable a timely response to potential health problems related to the environment," said CDC Director Dr. Julie Gerberding. "The National Environmental Public Health Tracking Program is a giant step towards fulfilling one of CDC's overarching goals and that is that people in all communities are protected from infectious, environmental, and terrorist threats. By integrating environmental and public health information systems, CDC will be better able to protect the nation's health by responding more timely to public health problems related to the environment."

Academic Partners for Excellence in Environmental Public Health Tracking

The focus of CDC's four Academic Partners for Excellence in Environmental Public Health Tracking is to increase understanding of

- the relationship between environmental hazards, exposures, and health effects;
- the methods required to collect, integrate, analyze, and interpret data; and
- effective techniques for dissemination of information to protect and improve health.

To develop this national network, methods for data collection, data linkage, and data analysis will need to be improved and evaluated. These Academic Partners will be looking for innovative, cost-effective data collection strategies that state and local health departments can use to obtain valid, high quality data on environmental health effects, exposures, and hazards. They will also seek data linkage methods for combined analysis of health and environmental data that could be used by state and local environmental public health programs in building a National EPHT Network. In addition, they will be developing statistical algorithms that could be used by state and local environmental public health programs to analyze trends and detect patterns of health effects occurrence, population exposure, or hazard levels in the environment that may indicate a problem. They will also develop effective training tools for all areas critical to the development, operation, maintenance, and use of a National EPHT Network. 🌐

Our National Partners

CDC has several national partners involved in the development and implementation of EPHT. They include the

- Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO),
- Association of Public Health Laboratories (APHL),
- National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO),
- National Environmental Health Association (NEHA),
- Environmental Council of the States (ECOS),
- Physicians for Social Responsibility (PSR),
- Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists (CSTE),
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA),
- National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), and
- United States Geological Survey (USGS).

These partners are a key component to the success of the EPHT initiative. This quarter, we are going to spotlight ASTHO and NACCHO, who are facilitating a series of discussions about tracking.

Background

During the 2005–06 project year, ASTHO and NACCHO have been hosting four facilitated discussions to bring together state and local health officials to talk about the development of the National EPHT Network. The goal of these meetings is to encourage open dialogue between state and local health and environmental professionals in building a tracking network that will benefit federal, state, and local partners. These meetings—scheduled for Maryland, Oregon, Wisconsin, and California—are based on a similar meeting that NACCHO conducted in New York State in 2004.

The meetings begin with a 2-hour facilitated discussion with the local health officials and state EPHT staff about local needs, expectations, and other issues. The group then hears from the state about their tracking program and demonstration projects. ASTHO and NACCHO worked with the four states to best use the afternoon sessions to increase communications and collaboration between the state and local attendees. In Maryland, for example, ASTHO and NACCHO facilitated roundtable discussions between staff from state and local health and environmental agencies staff. The afternoon discussions also included staff from the state's departments of planning, agriculture, and economic development to determine the priorities of Maryland's tracking program.

Meeting sites

The four states were chosen by their geographic location and having a CDC EPHT grant. The meetings were scheduled as follows:

- Maryland—September 29, 2005; primary contact: Tanesha Johnson-Baye, Maryland Department of Environment
- Oregon—October 5, 2005; primary contacts: Michael Huemann and Lori Barck, Oregon Department of Public Health and Human Services
- Wisconsin—December 5, 2005; primary contact: Andy Anderson, Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services, Division of Public Health, Bureau of Environmental Health
- California—February 9–10, 2006; primary contacts: Paul English and Eddie Oh, California Department of Health Services

Meeting Highlights

Here are some brief highlights and outcomes of the meetings:

- State and local health practitioners increased their knowledge about state tracking projects and the role local health agencies play in developing state and national tracking networks.
- Communications channels between state and local health practitioners were opened. Plans were implemented to keep those channels open and accessible in the future.
- Local public health agency staff increased their knowledge of tracking activities occurring at the state and national levels.
- In Maryland, public health and environmental agency staff worked through a series of case study exercises that demonstrated the use of tracking data in local public health problems.
- In Oregon, attendees from county health agencies watched a demonstration of an environmental health database created by a county health agency through a tracking mini-grant. Participants discussed ways to make real-time data available and how to establish a paperless data reporting system.
- Also in Oregon, state and local health agency staff heard a presentation from an environmental justice advocate. Through this discussion, health agency staff learned how a fully functioning tracking network could benefit local and community-based organizations. They also learned about limitations of a tracking network and effective ways to communicate that information to those types of organizations.
- At each meeting, participants expressed an interest in being kept up-to-date on state and national tracking efforts. Several states suggested using state environmental health association meetings and state environmental health meetings as venues to discuss tracking. They also wanted to keep the dialogue going between state and local practitioners. 🗺️

Workgroups/Committees Update

2005 October Grantee Workshop now in April 2006

The 2005 October Grantee Workshop was cancelled due to the threat of Hurricane Wilma in Florida. The meeting has been rescheduled for April 18–20, 2006 in Tampa. The original workshop planning committee has agreed to coordinate revisions to the program. Some of the previously scheduled October sessions will now be presented as Webinars (seminars on the Internet to present useful tools and information grantees can use immediately). The committee has been considering new sessions proposed for the April sessions and proposed keynote speakers. The members also have worked to confirm the availability of session leaders, speakers, moderators from October sessions for the April Workshop.

Note: Posters developed for the October Workshop may be updated as needed and displayed at the April Workshop.

Program Marketing and Outreach

The Program Marketing and Outreach (PMO) Workgroup is assisting CDC and its grantees in developing and implementing an outreach and marketing plan for the National EPHT Program. Specific responsibilities of the PMO include

continued on page 4

Workgroups/Committees Update

continued from page 3

developing appropriate education and outreach materials that emphasize and support the goals, objectives, and timely promotion of the national EPHT effort.

The work of the PMO is consistent with the *CDC's Strategy for the National Environmental Public Health Tracking Program* (April 2005) Goals 3 and 5—to disseminate information to guide policy, practice, and other actions to improve the nation's health, and to foster collaboration among health and environmental programs, respectively. The PMO is specifically developing targeted communications strategies and documents for EPHT, promoting and identifying effective risk communications strategies, and engaging both health and environmental programs interested and involved in EPHT.

PMO is currently organized into four target audience teams: media, agencies, professional associations, and advocacy/legal. The target audience teams and the full PMO Work Group are producing a host of materials. The PMO recently established a community team focused on environmental health disparities.

Objectives

The PMO performs the following functions:

- Helps determine key messages
- Assists in developing tools to disseminate messages (e.g., fact sheets, "At-A-Glance" templates) that can be individualized and used by funding recipients
- Identifies and profiles key audiences
- Identifies various distribution channels, activities, and outreach strategies for promoting program information
- Identifies credible spokespeople
- Evaluates communication activities

Standards and Network Development Workgroup

The Standards and Network Development (SND) Workgroup is continuing to identify existing standards and recommend the adoption of those standards where appropriate for the National EPHT Network. SND is also recommending (to the appropriate standards authorities) the development of standards where they do not exist and are needed to support the National EPHT Network. These efforts are done to ensure compatibility, to the extent feasible, with existing and developing efforts such as the Public Health Information Network (PHIN) and EPA's National Environmental Information Exchange Network (NEIEN).

SND subgroups and teams have been working to fulfill their missions:

- The Network Architecture Subgroup has developed network architecture schematics and is refining a report summarizing the potential architecture.
- The Geospatial and Locational Referencing Subgroup released the *GeoPrimer* guide, it is actively refining a *GeoPrimer Lite*, and it is reviewing developing standards.
- The Vocabulary Team has been actively assessing and summarizing the value of controlled vocabularies for the National EPHT Network.
- New SND teams have been formed to address details on metadata registries and to produce a technical glossary.

Training Committee/EPHT 101

In March 2004, the National EPHT Program established the EPHT Training Committee. The goals of this committee are to

- coordinate the identification of the training needs of state and local EPHT partners,
- identify existing training resources,
- facilitate development of training opportunities, and
- coordinate delivery of training in an efficient manner.

The work of the EPHT Training Committee is consistent with *CDC's Strategy for the National Environmental Public Health Tracking Program* (April 2005) Goal 2—to enhance the environmental public health tracking workforce and infrastructure. Improving infrastructure and developing the workforce will ensure that essential services are provided for existing and emerging environmental public health issues. Sustainability of the National EPHT Program depends on a trained workforce and adequate equipment, data, and tools for using the data.

The EPHT Training Committee includes representatives from grantees and funded partners. To date, the committee has reviewed training needs of state and local grantees identified at national EPHT meetings and through partner assessments conducted by schools of public health. The committee is working with CDC to develop an online, modular course covering basic principles of EPHT for new EPHT grantee staff and potentially other health and environmental partners, legislators, and community members. CDC has contracted with Bearing Point to work with the subject matter experts on the committee to develop this course, entitled EPHT 101.

2006 National EPHT Conference Planning Committee

Thank you to everyone who volunteered to serve on the 2006 National EPHT Conference Planning Committee! Planning is underway at CDC for the newly scheduled conference and regular committee meetings will commence shortly. The conference is scheduled for August 9–11 in Atlanta, Georgia. Save the date and stay tuned for more details!

EPHT-Birth Defects Workgroup

Participants in the EPHT-Birth Defects Workgroup included representatives from the EPHT grantee states and the Centers for Birth Defects Research and Prevention (CBDRP). The intent of this CDC workgroup was to foster an important dialog between these two groups with complementary expertise and experiences.

This workgroup had three objectives:

1. Develop a list of initial birth defects and related environmental exposures that should be tracked and potentially linked.
2. Strategize on ways to collaborate across programs to move forward on standardizing birth defects surveillance and integrating it into environmental public health tracking.
3. Discuss increased autism surveillance and related environmental factors as candidates for the National EPHT Network.

Participants continued to share information about what the different states have been doing in terms of birth defects and environmental tracking, either as part of demonstration projects through EPHT funding, or through CBDRP.

The workgroup divided into two subgroups. One subgroup developed a birth defect priority list. The other developed a priority list of environmental hazards and exposures that included information about the exposure pathway medium, data sources and characteristics, and example indicators.

continued on page 5

Carbon Monoxide Poisoning Surveillance Workgroup

The Carbon Monoxide (CO) Poisoning Surveillance Workgroup was formed as the result of increasing interest among EPHT grantees in CO poisoning as an EPHT indicator. A number of attributes of CO poisoning make it an excellent example of an environmental public health indicator (EPHI), including

- the clear and acute relationship of the outcome to an environmental exposure;
- the availability of data sources in most states;
- the potential for data to be available to a national network;
- the amount of information still unknown for effective prevention, including the relative contribution of exposure sources and settings, and the prevalence and severity of neurological sequelae; and,
- the documented occurrence of excess cases during disaster-related power outages.

CO is also an ambient air pollutant that is associated with adverse cardiovascular disease and birth outcomes. Several areas of the United States are in nonattainment of CO ambient air quality standards.

Goals for the COS Workgroup

1. Build a sustainable nationwide, or national, system for CO surveillance,
2. Standardize methodology for routine and disaster-related CO surveillance,
3. Promote programs for prevention/education of CO poisoning.

Current projects include

- developing a position paper on "CO poisoning as an EPHT Indicator," and
- collaborating with CDC's Air Pollution and Respiratory Health (APRH) branch on a project to evaluate the utility of the current CSTE case definition for surveillance of CO

Participating members include

- **CDC:** EPHT and APRH;
- **EPHT grantees:** Connecticut; Florida, Maine, Missouri, New York City, Utah, Wisconsin, and Washington.

The workgroup meets via teleconference the third Thursday of each month from 1–2:30 p.m. EST; the call-in information is telephone number: 866-762-1981; passcode 475 7706. The workgroup is currently co-chaired by Judith Graber of Maine EPHT and Steven Macdonald of Washington EPHT. 🌐

Talk to Tracking

EPHT Listserv

EPHT has its very own listserv. The listserv was set up as a mechanism to encourage two-way communication between CDC and all of its EPHT partners. CDC can distribute information to all of its partners and those partners can provide direct input to the Environmental Public Health Tracking Program. Sign up for the EPHT listserv or e-mail your request to epht@cdc.gov. To subscribe to the EPHT listserv, please send an e-mail to listserv@listserv.cdc.gov with the command "subscribe EPHT firstname lastname" in the body of the e-mail (without quotes). The subject line should be left blank. Join us!

EPHT Mailbox

Have questions or comments? Now you can e-mail the National EPHT Program at EPHT@cdc.gov. 🌐

Events

Upcoming Events

RESCHEDULED - 2005 Grantee Workshop

Original dates: October 25-27, 2005
New dates: April 18-20, 2006
Tampa, Florida

2006 Spatial Epidemiology Conference

May 23–25, 2006
London, United Kingdom

2006 National EPHT Conference

August 9–11, 2006
Atlanta, Georgia

Ongoing Events

CDC EPHT Webinars

4th Monday of every month
1:00–2:30 p.m. EST

For more information and past presentations, go to:

<http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/tracking/webinars/home.htm>

To receive announcements about the EPHT Webinars, e-mail your request to EPHT@cdc.gov. 🌐