

LOUISIANA

Keeping Track, Promoting Health



"CDC's National Environmental Public Health Tracking Network is the most important accomplishment of the past decade."

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For decades, the United States has faced a fundamental gap in understanding how environmental contaminants affect people's health. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is working to close this gap by improving surveillance through the National Environmental Public Health Tracking Network (Tracking Network). The Tracking Network is a dynamic Web-based tool that, for the first time, provides health and environment data in one easy to find location.

Policy makers and public health officials can use the Tracking Network to make critical decisions about where to target environmental public health resources and interventions. Health practitioners and researchers can use the Tracking Network to learn more about health conditions related to the environment, and improve treatment plans. Anyone can use the Tracking Network to find out how the environment may be affecting them, their family's or community's health.

The building blocks of the national network are state and local health departments around the country that are funded to build local tracking systems. These systems supply data to the National Tracking Network and address local environmental public health concerns. The tracking programs use their networks every day to improve the health of their communities.

Why Tracking Matters in Louisiana

Louisiana repeatedly has ranked below the national averages for public health and environmental quality. Public health and environmental issues such as oil spills, carbon monoxide poisonings, and well water contamination are just a few of the problems that affect Louisiana. In 2009, Louisiana began receiving funding from CDC to develop a statewide tracking program that is now part of the National Environmental Health Tracking Network. The Louisiana Environmental Public Health Tracking Network (Louisiana Tracking Network) will strengthen surveillance, improve data access, support response capacity, and guide public health actions and decisions. All of these improvements will help the health department and its partners improve the health of Louisiana residents. The improvements will also expand public access to information so that everyone in the state can better understand how the environment affects their health.



TRACKING IN ACTION

The Problem	Tracking in Action	Improved Public Health
<p>Deepwater Horizon (British Petroleum) oil spill</p>	<p>On April 20, 2010, a drill rig explosion caused about 4.9 million barrels of oil to spill into the Gulf of Mexico. The explosion killed 11 platform workers and injured 17. Marine and wildlife habitats were severely affected, and the fishing and tourism industries of U.S. coastal states were devastated.</p>	<p>The Louisiana Tracking Program has been developing a response to the oil spill in collaboration with CDC/ATSDR*, CDC/NIOSH†, and agencies from other affected Gulf Coast states. Survey- and map-based tracking systems were developed to capture and track health complaints and environmental monitoring results. In addition, the Louisiana Tracking Program worked with the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) to make sure that outreach materials were available in several languages and available to those with limited Internet access.</p>
<p>Addressing concerns form imported drywall</p>	<p>After Hurricane Katrina, rebuilding throughout the Gulf states greatly increased the demand for drywall. In February 2009, the state health department began getting health complaints from residents who had rebuilt their homes using imported drywall. The health complaints included headaches, respiratory infections, eye irritations, dry coughs, and nosebleeds.</p>	<p>The Louisiana Tracking Program began logging cases from call-in surveys that captured information such as the physical characteristics of the home, exposure duration, and health effects experienced by members of the household. The cases were mapped to assess the magnitude of the health problem and to track locations. State health department staff worked with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to identify drywall exposure cases for indoor air testing.</p>
<p>Educating private well water users about contamination</p>	<p>Louisiana has a large number of residential water wells located within one mile of either an operating or abandoned wood preservation or wood treatment facility. No Louisiana law requires private well water testing. This limits the ability to assess potential exposures to chemicals through well water.</p>	<p>In partnership with the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality and the state's Safe Drinking Water Program, the Louisiana Tracking staff conducted a pilot project to link environmental, exposure, and health outcome data around wood preservation and treatment sites. The pilot project included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compiling groundwater and drinking water data from areas near 22 inactive wood preservation and treatment facilities. • Compiling data on bladder, lung, and all-sites cancers in areas surrounding wood preservation facilities. • Establishing the Private Well Water Education Initiative to conduct outreach to newly registered private well owners.

*Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry
 †National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health