

# NEW MEXICO

*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. Read more about these activities below.

## Why Tracking Matters in New Mexico

The New Mexico Tracking Program affords a better understanding of how the environment and other factors affect community health. The program can also help reduce the burden of various diseases. The New Mexico Tracking Program has already begun using its state Tracking Network to monitor and investigate exposures, to explore linkages between environmental hazards and health outcomes, and to advise citizens of New Mexico about how they can begin reducing environmental exposures and protecting their health.

New Mexico has been part of CDC's Environmental Public Health Tracking Program since 2002. It launched its own network in September 2008.



# TRACKING IN ACTION

|  | The Problem   | Tracking in Action   | Improved Public Health  |
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| <p><b>Uranium unknowns: Making connections and directing health action</b></p> | <p>The Grants Mineral Belt is high in uranium deposits. People living in this area are likely exposed to uranium in many ways from many sources. This raised concerns about the health of Grants Mineral Belt residents.</p>  | <p>The New Mexico Tracking Program looked at drinking water and urine sample test results. The tests measured amounts of uranium in the samples. The tracking program used the data to identify Grants Mineral Belt area residents whose drinking water was likely to expose them to uranium. The tracking program also developed resources to teach residents about uranium exposure.</p> | <p>The data collected and analyzed by state tracking staffers helped public health officials and citizens learn more about uranium exposure. Now public health officials are advising of ways to reduce potential uranium exposures.</p> <p>The tracking program brought together national, state, and local health agencies and partners. The tracking program collected ideas and data from all of them and make it widely available. In this way the tracking program assisted in educating Grants Mineral Belt residents about uranium exposures.</p> |
| <p><b>A team approach to addressing cancer concerns</b></p>                    | <p>A resident called the New Mexico Department of Health to express concern about a potential increase in rates of tobacco-related cancers in the community.</p> <p>The health department put together a team to investigate and respond to the caller's concerns. Team members came from the state tracking program, the Chronic Public Health Disease Prevention Bureau, and the NM Tumor Registry.</p>         | <p>The New Mexico Tracking Program provided census-tract level data from the state tracking network to the team. The team then looked at cancer rates and risk factors for the caller's neighborhood.</p>  | <p>As a result of the investigation, the team provided a clear picture to the caller and the community about tobacco-related cancer risk in the area and the people most affected.</p> <p>Without the tracking network data, the team could not have provided specific cancer information. Also, responding to the caller's concerns would have taken much longer.</p>  |
| <p><b>Improving emergency response in rural areas</b></p>                      | <p>Propane gas leaks can cause unsafe levels of carbon monoxide (CO) to build up inside a home. People—and especially children—who breathe in CO can become very sick.</p> <p>When emergencies like CO poisonings happen in rural parts of New Mexico, providing timely health services can be difficult. Often, rural areas do not have the staff or special skills to respond as quickly as in other areas.</p> | <p>New Mexico's tracking program has developed educational resources to use during CO emergencies. Patient education materials on CO exposure and poisoning and other topics are available on the program's tracking Web site.</p> <p>Also, tracking staff are available to consult with health care workers across the state about health education and outreach.</p>                     | <p>Because of the state tracking program's resources, health care workers across the state can better serve the emergency needs of rural residents. Health care workers can access materials any time of the day to educate their communities about</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Propane gas safety,</li> <li>• CO exposures, and</li> <li>• Associated health effects.</li> </ul> <p>Without the state tracking program, rural communities would not have access to such high quality materials.</p>                                     |