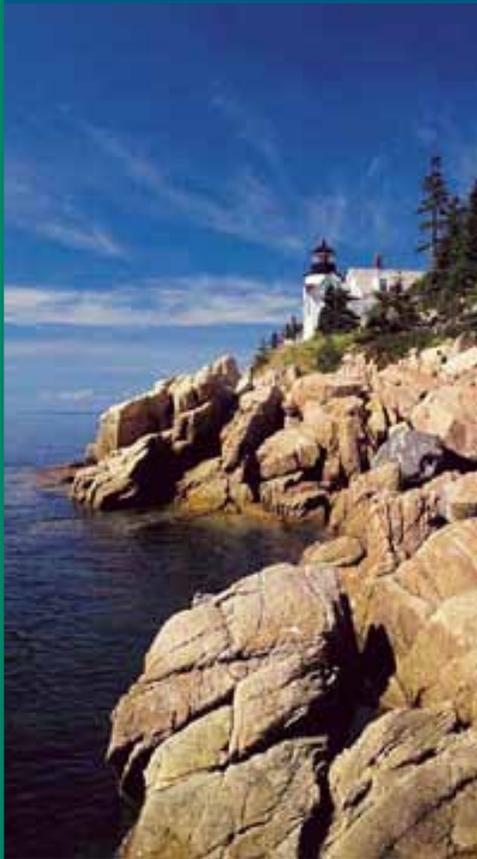


MAINE

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 Maine

Since joining CDC's Tracking Program, Maine has greatly expanded its ability to monitor environmental health issues. Maine can now respond to and share environmental health information more quickly than before joining the program. Since entering the Tracking Program in 2002, Maine has built advanced surveillance and data analysis systems. These systems provide health planners, policymakers, and other decision makers with a more sophisticated and timely understanding of key environmental health indicators.

In 2006, Maine began building its own online network. Known as the Maine Tracking Network, it went live in early 2009. This powerful collection of data is now available to health department staff, community organizations, policymakers, health care providers, and anyone interested in environmental health. The Maine Tracking Network allows people to look at environmental health data in new ways, provides connections between the health of people and the environment they live in, and assists in collaboration to address problems.



TRACKING IN ACTION

	The Problem	Tracking in Action	Improved Public Health
<p>Preventing childhood lead poisoning</p>	<p>The number of newly identified cases of childhood lead poisoning in Maine has decreased steadily over the last five years. But lead poisoning continues to threaten children's health and development. To continue reducing the number of cases of lead poisoning, the Maine Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program needed to understand more about the state's at risk children.</p>	<p>The Maine Tracking Program used geo-coding and mapping to analyze childhood lead poisoning data. This fresh look at an old problem shed light on some previously unknown critical risk factors. For example, the new analysis revealed that 40% of all childhood lead poisonings occur in just five urban areas. Further probing showed that within those five urban areas, more than 80% of lead-poisoned children lived in rental housing. Data from the U.S. Census Bureau then allowed the tracking program to look by census blocks at the percentage of houses built before 1950. This revealed streets and whole neighborhoods where children were most at risk.</p>	<p>The Maine Tracking Program gave the Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program an advanced understanding of lead poisoning distribution throughout the state. Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention could now shift resources where they were most needed. Community groups in the five urban areas where 40% of childhood lead poisonings occur could now receive contracts from the Maine CDC for targeted prevention activities in their communities. The contracts help to educate local landlords and tenants about the dangers of lead paint dust and help landlords test their units for lead dust. After just one year of targeted outreach, about 240 rental units were tested for lead dust. Landlords whose units tested high for lead dust were given support or were enrolled in the Lead Hazard Control Program. The Maine Tracking Program has been critical in helping prevent lead poisoning in Maine children.</p>
<p>Reducing carbon monoxide poisoning</p>	<p>Every year, an estimated 15,200 people seek medical care in an emergency department or miss at least one day of work due to exposure to carbon monoxide(CO) in the U.S. Correctly installing, maintaining, and operating carbon monoxide-emitting devices and appropriately using carbon monoxide detectors can help prevent CO poisoning. Even though no national surveillance system exists for acute CO poisoning, a body of literature describes excess cases of CO poisoning due to power outages from storms, floods, and hurricanes. However, Maine did not have an active tracking system capable of identifying risk factors for CO poisoning.</p>	<p>The tracking program developed a state-wide surveillance system for CO poisoning. This system uses multiple data sources as well as geographic information to identify groups at a higher risk for potential exposure. In addition, tracking staff developed a module for the state's Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System that allows them to track CO detector use. Tracking staff were able to amend the mandates for the Maine CDC's public health activities to make environmentally related health conditions reportable. In 2008, CO poisoning became the first condition to be included under this mandate.</p>	<p>With data from the CO poisoning surveillance system, the Maine Tracking Program found that almost every case of CO poisoning in the state was associated with not having a CO detector. These data led to new legislation requiring CO detectors in all rental units and in single family homes when there is an addition or renovation and whenever a property is sold.</p> <p>The law went into effect in September 2009, and the Maine Tracking Network is working to measure the effect of the law on CO poisoning prevention.</p>
<p>Tracking the effect of outdoor air quality on health</p>	<p>Asthma is one of the most common and costly illnesses in the United States. Maine has one of the highest rates of asthma in the country. About 130,000 Mainers—including 28,000 children—have asthma. Put another way, about one in 10 children and adults in Maine have asthma. Maine often has elevated levels of ozone and particulate matter. People are understandably concerned about the effects of ozone on asthma. Ozone is a main ingredient in smog. At ground level, ozone can be a health risk. Studies have shown that as ozone levels increase, asthma-related hospital stays and emergency department visits tend also to increase.</p>	<p>Maine's Tracking Program linked outdoor ozone data with asthma-related emergency department data. Now scientists can estimate ozone-related asthma cases both in a community and statewide. Further studies show asthma cases associated with ozone levels by age, sex, and geography.</p>	<p>The tracking program has analyzed the association between asthma and outdoor air quality. The health department has used this information to identify Mainers at high risk. Asthma has no cure, but it can be controlled. Learning about this association has helped the Maine Tracking Program provide information to health care professionals. They can now target people who are at risk and can share prevention tips.</p>