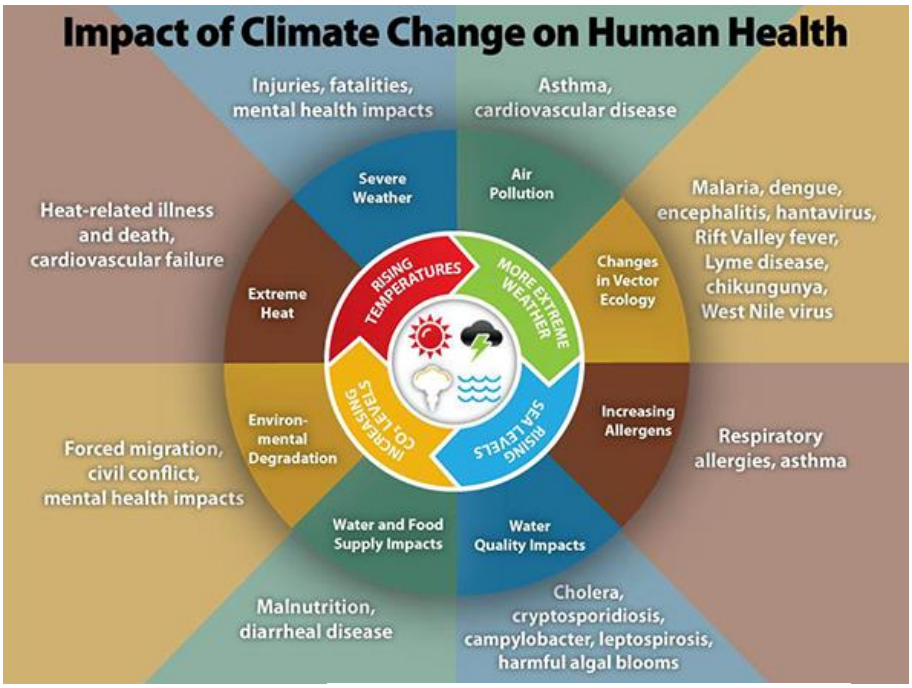
New Jersey Climate Change and Public Health Working Group:

A Partnership Facilitated by the New Jersey Climate Adaptation Alliance

Climate change presents serious challenges to public health in New Jersey as well as in the United States and around world. The multidimensional impacts of climate change include direct health effects of more frequent, intense, and longer-lasting extreme heat events that also worsen risks of drought, wildfire, and air pollution risks; increasingly frequent extreme precipitation, intense storms, and changes in precipitation patterns that lead to drought and ecosystem changes, and rising sea levels that intensify coastal flooding and storm surge.

In the coming decades, New Jersey can expect an increase in average annual temperature and precipitation, with more rain in the winter. More intense extreme weather events are anticipated, including heat waves, hurricanes, and extreme precipitation events with subsequent flooding. New Jersey is also at risk of more frequent and severe coastal flooding due to sea level rise. [1]



U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Predicted health effects from conditions of a changing climate include increased respiratory and cardiovascular disease, injuries and premature deaths related to extreme weather events, changes in the prevalence and geographical distribution of food- and waterborne illnesses and other infectious diseases, and threats to mental health. Not everyone is equally at risk. Important considerations include demographic conditions (e.g. age, race) socioeconomic status and availability of economic resources, current level of health and exposure to additional health stressors, and location (e.g. floodplains, coastal zones, and urban areas).[2]

The New Jersey Climate Adaptation Alliance is a network of diverse organizations from throughout the State that have come together to build capacity in New Jersey to prepare for impacts of a changing climate.[3] The Alliance is participated in and facilitated by several programs at Rutgers University including the Rutgers Climate Institute, the Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy, the School of Public Health and the Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School. Under the umbrella of the Alliance, these partners, in collaboration with the New Jersey Public Health Association and the New Jersey Association of County and City Health Officials, are convening a ***Public Health and Climate Change Working Group*** to build capacity to address public health impacts of climate change in New Jersey.

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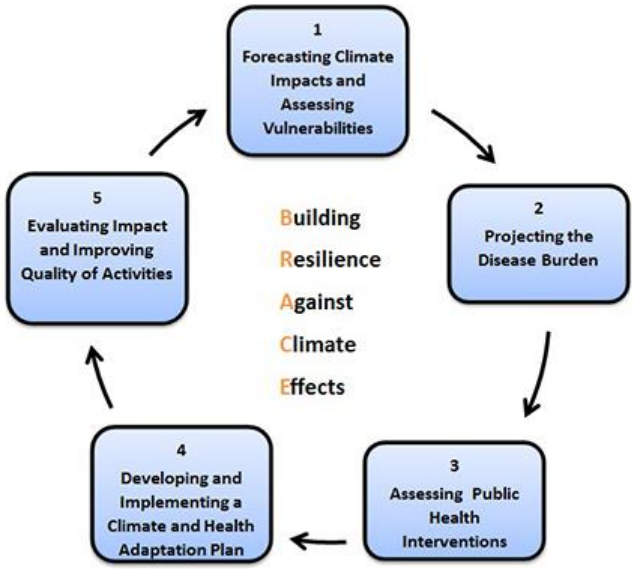
[1] http://climatechange.rutgers.edu/resources/state-of-the-climate-new-jersey-2013

[2] http://nca2014.globalchange.gov/report/sectors/human-health

[3] http://njadapt.rutgers.edu/

The United States Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is working with 16 states and 2 cities as part of CDC's "Climate-Ready States and Cities Initiative" to prepare comprehensive programs that predict and prepare for health impacts of climate change. [4] CDC's effort is guided by five sequential steps, the Building Resilience Against Climate Effects (BRACE) framework that is designed to increase climate change preparedness in the public health community. The BRACE framework applies a risk management approach to allow a state to use the best available science to project likely climate change health impacts and prioritize interventions. Adopting BRACE reinforces the public health community's established commitment to evidence-based practice and institutional learning, both of which are central to successfully engaging the significant new challenges that climate change presents.[5]



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While New Jersey does not currently participate in the CDC "Climate-Ready States and Cities Initiative," CDC is prepared to provide technical support to a new ***New Jersey Public Health and Climate Change Working Group*** and to bring CDC's scientific expertise and the experiences of the other participating jurisdictions to support a collaborative effort in New Jersey under the umbrella of the Climate Adaptation Alliance. The ***Public Health and Climate Change Working Group*** will be focusing on several initial efforts during Fall 2015 and winter 2016. The Group will:

- Advise Rutgers on the development of a New Jersey *Climate and Health Profile Report (CHPR)* that will serve to qualitatively describe likely impacts of climate change and anticipated ways in which those impacts will influence health outcomes in New Jersey. The CHPR will present a broad, statewide assessment of demographic, geographic and occupational vulnerability to climate change risks. The CHPR will serve as an initial "framing" document to educate practitioners, decision-makers and the general public as well as to inform a subsequent, more detailed and quantitative assessment of vulnerable populations, projections of disease burden and identification of likely interventions to reduce negative health impacts;
- Provide Rutgers with input on initial development of approaches to quantitatively assess vulnerability and projected disease burden beginning with a proof in concept on compilation of data on temperature and heat;
- Serve as a planning committee for a January 2016 statewide public health and climate change workshop and work session; and
- Identify any immediate efforts (e.g. development of outreach and educational materials) that can and should be undertaken in New Jersey to attain short-term gains of increasing the State's capacity to prepare for public health impacts from climate change.

In addition to the Working Group, Rutgers has assembled an internal team of expert reviewers who are available to provide technical consultation and review of materials under development. These combined efforts are expected to better position New Jersey to receive future support and assistance in its efforts to increase capacity to address public health impacts of climate change. More information can be found at http://climatechange.rutgers.edu.

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[4] http://www.cdc.gov/climateandhealth/climate_ready.htm
[5] http://www.cdc.gov/climateandhealth/brace.htm