

Human Health Impacts of Global Warming on Maine



Around the world, global warming threatens irreversible damage not only to the environment but to human health and well being. And Maine will be no exception. A recent report from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) found global warming could harm Maine in many ways, including reducing air quality, disrupting water supplies for municipal and agricultural use and local flooding and contamination of water supplies.

Climate-Related Possible Impacts	Health	Community Impact	Human Welfare
Degraded Air Quality	✓		
Heat Waves	✓	✓	✓
Drought		✓	
Extreme Rainfall with flooding	✓	✓	✓
Sea Level Rise		✓	✓
Early Snowmelt		✓	✓

Source: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Climate Change Science Program and the Subcommittee on Global Change Research Final Report, Synthesis and Assessment Product, (SAP 4.6) July 2008.

According to the EPA, the impacts of global warming on Maine could include:

Degraded air quality:

- Increasing heart and lung diseases, such as asthma.

Intense heat waves:

- Increasing heat stress and heat stroke.
- Increasing demand for energy.
- Greater physical discomfort.
- Limiting outdoor activities and recreation.

Drought:

- Straining municipal water supplies.
- Damaging crops and lowering farm productivity.

Extreme rainfall with flooding:

- Contaminating water and food supplies with associated gastrointestinal illnesses such as salmonella and giardia.
- Increased exposure to carbon monoxide poisoning from portable generators.
- Disruption of transportation and other infrastructure.
- Increasing flood and wind damage.

Early snowmelt:

- Disrupting water supplies for municipal and agricultural use.
- Limiting snow-related recreational opportunities and disrupting recreational industries.

In order to avoid the worst impacts of global warming, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has concluded that industrialized nations like the U.S. need to cut their emissions of global warming pollution 80 percent by 2050. For more information, visit www.pewglobalwarming.org, or to view the full EPA report, visit www.epa.gov.