

Human Health Impacts of Global Warming on Montana



Around the world, global warming threatens irreversible damage not only to the environment but to human health and well being. And Montana will be no exception. A recent report from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) found global warming could harm Montana in many ways, including disrupting water supplies for municipal and agricultural use, increasing risk for heart and lung diseases and damaging crops and lowering farm productivity.

| Climate-Related Possible Impacts | Health | Community Impact | Human Welfare |
|----------------------------------|--------|------------------|---------------|
| Degraded Air Quality | ✓ | | |
| Wildfires | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Heat Waves | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Drought | | ✓ | |
| 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 Montana 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.

Wildfires:

- Contributing to greater asthma risks and aggravating chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD).
- Disrupting communities.
- Property destruction.

Drought:

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

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.