

EnviroHealthLink KY's Environmental Public Health Tracking Network



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State Web Site: envirohealthlink.org

National Web Site: <http://ephtracking.cdc.gov>

Sources of Information for the Database

The Environmental Public Health Tracking Network (EPHTN) is an integrated, web-based portal system funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to collect data on environmental hazards, exposures, and related health conditions for display in a format accessible to the general public. The data on the network comes from a variety of national, state, and local sources. Currently, the national Environmental Public Health Tracking Program is made up of 26 contributing members in state health departments and in New York City. Kentucky and Michigan were selected to become the newest members of the tracking program in August 2014. Each grantee site is required to build its own web-based portal with the same data content as in the national portal. CDC does however encourage grantees to customize their portals with state specific information. Kentucky launched its web-based portal, titled "EnviroHealthLink" in December 2016.

Description of the Data Collected

The states funded by the tracking program are required to collect and submit National-ly Consistent Data and Measures (NCDMs) to the national network for display on the national tracking portal. The data are organized into a set of content areas defined by the CDC, which are reviewed and revised by the tracking program's Content Workgroup.

EnviroHealthLink

The currently required content areas include: Acute Myocardial Infarction, Air Quality, Asthma, Birth Defects, Cancer, Carbon Monoxide Poisoning, Childhood Lead Poisoning, Drinking Water, and Reproductive Health Outcomes. Kentucky has also added optional state specific indicators, such as radon, as well as created interactive maps on our website to increase data utilization and communication of information. Other optional content areas that have recently been added to the network include Climate Indicators, Community Design, Developmental Disabilities, and Health Behaviors. In 2010, Kentucky was paired with Florida by the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO) as part of its mentorship program. The outcomes of this mentorship included two pilot projects examining the link between the environment and respiratory health outcomes, especially asthma. In the fall of 2014, Kentucky was one of four members of the ASTHO program to submit hospital discharge data to the tracking network. Birth Defect content area was recently submitted to the national tracking network in spring 2017. This means that all Nationally Consistent Data and Measures will be available for Kentucky on both the state and national tracking portals.

Strengths of the Data

The EPHTN provides valid scientific information on environmental exposures and adverse health conditions as well as the possible spatial and temporal relations between them. The network allows data from counties within states to be compared, as well as data between states. The EPHTN is the only surveillance system that organizes both environmental and health data into a single source, accessible to the general public, as well as researchers, decision makers, and public health professionals. The data is displayed in map, graph, or chart form and can be downloaded into CSV files. Metadata describing the exact source and details about each content area are available on the website.

Data Limitations

Limitations of tracking data for Kentucky include statistical instability requiring spatial and temporal aggregation of data due to low numbers within small areas. Each data content area has specific limitations on the smallest number that can be displayed per data cell, the time period for which the data is available, and the geographic resolution. Concerns about the release of sensitive information frequently limit the data that can be displayed for single years and small areas, especially for rare conditions such as cancer and birth defects. States or counties where there are no health outcome cases or no measured occurrences of an environmental hazard are labeled as “no events”. For example, some counties do not have air monitors, and some community water systems do not sample or test for every contaminant during every reporting period. Rates, proportions, and percentages of data are checked for their stability. Any rate or measure with a relative standard error (RSE) greater than or equal to 30 percent is flagged as unstable, or in the case of cancer data, suppressed (not shown). In accordance with CDC guidelines, cell counts are suppressed when the number of cases or the underlying population is small. In general, non-zero counts of less than 6 are suppressed for counties with a total population of less than 100,000 people.

Specific Uses of Information

- Community level data for health assessments and health improvement planning.
- Compare environmental conditions and the incidence of chronic health conditions between counties in Kentucky, as well as with other states.
- Identify trends in chronic health conditions and environmental hazards.

- Monitor the levels of environmental hazards over time and place.
- Generate hypotheses about possible associations between exposure to environmental hazards, social determinants of health, and chronic health outcomes.
- Develop and evaluate plans for avoiding exposure to environmental hazards and mitigating the impact of exposure.
- Design and implement public health actions specific to a community or jurisdiction.

System Evaluation

The data collection is routinely monitored utilizing quality control standards developed by CDC. Evaluation of quality is determined through monthly and annual reports of these performance standards.

Data Set Availability

The data on the Environmental Public Health Tracking Network is available to the public at no cost through both the national web portal located at ephtracking.cdc.gov and the EnviroHealthLink portal located at envirohealthlink.org. Users may select content area, indicator, geography, year, and a number of other stratifying factors. Once a user has made a selection, the data can be viewed in map, table or graph form. The data is also available for download from both the national and state portals. The national tracking program has recently developed an advanced option for the web portal that will allow the user to view several data content areas or subsets side-by-side. Public web portals for other grantee sites can be accessed through the national EPHTN website.

Data Release Policy

The data on the National Environmental Public Health Tracking web portal are available to the general public without restrictions. Requests for more detailed data than displayed on the public portal can be made either to the national tracking program or to individual grantee sites.

Data Publications

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has many peer-reviewed articles published based on data utilized from the tracking network. These articles can be found on the Publications page of the national tracking program website.

Suggested Data Citation

Each data citation should begin with EnviroHealthLink, Kentucky Department for Public Health, (content area and other details that were requested in query); Accessed From: envirohealthlink.org - Accessed on: (Insert Date). After running a query, the user is provided with a date/time stamp and can choose to load or save the query definition, or output the data to an Excel file.

Contributing Authors

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