

Public Health Week: Climate Change Inspires Change

City of St. Louis Department of Health

Since 1996, the American Public Health Association has sponsored National Public Health Week in an effort to highlight the importance of public health in communities across the United States. This year's theme is *Climate Change: Our Health in the Balance* and the City of St. Louis Department of Health is gearing up for a week's worth of activities. The City of St. Louis Department of Health has been a partner of National Public Health Week for several years. The themes for the week: Be Prepared. Eat Differently. Travel Differently. Green Your Work. Green Your Home.

Climate change, an effect of global warming, has become a hot topic over the past several years. However, most people think of it as an environmental issue and are not aware of the effects climate change will have on the health of our communities, our families, and our children. Scientists predict cities in the Midwest will experience more extreme temperatures, which will lead to more heat stress and heatstroke. Across the country, scientists predict an increase in the areas affected by Lyme Disease and West Nile Virus as well as water supply shortages which will affect our food supply. The change in climate will cause more people to suffer from allergies and asthma. These changes will have a greater impact on vulnerable populations like the elderly, young children, and those with compromised immune systems.

So what can be done to help decrease the effects of climate change? The City of St. Louis Department of Health has the following suggestions on simple things you can do that could make a world of difference.

- **Be Prepared.** With the rise in temperature that can create an increase in severe weather events and overall precipitation, be sure your home is not a breeding ground for mosquitoes which can carry West Nile Virus. Use insect repellents when spending time outdoors. Stay well hydrated by drinking plenty of water on warm days and keep air conditioners and fans in good repair. Have an emergency kit ready for a weather related event like a flood or power outage. Check out the "Public Health Week" link on our website <http://stlouis.missouri.org/citygov/health/> for more ideas on ways you can protect your home against mosquitoes and steps you can take to be prepared in the case of an emergency.

What the department is doing: The City of St. Louis Department of Health will be hosting an interactive learning session on climate change and global warming for the youth of Herbert Hoover Boys' & Girls' Club. To schedule a session for your youth center, dial (314) 612-5437.

- **Travel Differently.** Your car is the biggest contributor to greenhouse gases, the gases responsible for trapping heat in the earth's atmosphere thus causing temperature increases across the globe. By leaving your car at home or minimizing the number of trips you take in your car during the day, you can effectively do your part to protect our Earth's health. So find a used bike, take the bus, walk, or run. Just give your car (and the atmosphere) a break whenever you can!

What the department is doing: As a part of National Public Health Week, the City of St. Louis Department of Health is asking that you join us in traveling differently on Tuesday, April 8th.

- **Eat Differently.** "Buy locally, think globally." Food grown in your local state or community does not have to travel cross country to your kitchen thus saving energy

and reducing greenhouse gases. There are at least 10 farmer's markets in the St. Louis Metro Area that sell locally grown produce, meat, poultry, and other products. Check out the "Public Health Week" link on our website

<http://stlouis.missouri.org/citygov/health/> for a listing of these local markets' locations and hours of operation.

What the department is doing: The City of St. Louis Department of Health will set up informational booths at two local schools educating students on how changing their eating habits could help save their planet. Dial (314) 612-5437 to request a booth for your school.

- **Green Your Work.** Recycling, reusing, and reducing the amount of trash you create is one of the easiest things you can do promote good environmental health. Start a recycling program. Visit the City of St. Louis Refuse Department's website <http://stlouis.missouri.org/citygov/recycle/> for more information on how your business, school, or organization can get started.

What the department is doing: The City of St. Louis Department of Health is finding new ways to save energy. In addition to our recycling program, we are asking employees to commit to other energy saving practices.

- **Green Your Home.** Use energy efficient appliances and products and turn off your lights. Energy Star appliances, though they cost more upfront, will actually save you money throughout their lifetime because they use less energy, which means lower electric bills for you! In addition, The City of St. Louis has 26 FREE recycling sites throughout the city that citizens can use. Check out the "Public Health Week" link on our website <http://stlouis.missouri.org/citygov/health/> for locations.

What the department is doing: The City of St. Louis Department of Health is sponsoring a "How Green is Your Home? An Assessment Guide to Creating an Eco-Friendly Home" on-line survey. You can find this assessment on our "Public Health Week" page or visit the City Hall Rotunda and stop by the National Public Health Week display table on Friday, April 11, 2008.

By taking small steps like these, not only will you be protecting the planet, but you will also be making an impact on the health of your community, your family, and yourself. No one will be spared from the effects of climate change which is why everyone needs to make small changes for the future. The City of St. Louis Department of Health encourages you to think of climate change as a health issue for which everyone is at risk and one that everyone can do something about. **Remember to visit our site:** <http://stlouis.missouri.org/citygov/health/> **and click on "Public Health Week" for more information.** Take action today. Together, we can create a better tomorrow.