People are the heart of New York State. As climate change leads to hazards that affect the state’s communities, protecting the health and safety of every resident is essential. This includes reducing the risk of harm where people live, work, and play. It also includes ensuring the resilience of systems and services critical to health and safety, such as medical care, buildings, energy, food and water, transportation, and natural environments.

**Climate Change Impacts on New York State’s Human Health and Safety**

A wide range of climate hazards can directly and indirectly influence people’s health and safety. These include:

- More frequent and intense heat waves.
- Changes in the amount and duration of precipitation, including heavy rainfall and drought.
- More frequent and intense storms.
- Sea level rise.

These climate hazards can happen on their own or in combination with each other to create harmful impacts that affect human health and safety, such as:

- **Physical health and safety impacts**, including heat stress, dehydration, and cardiovascular illness from rising temperatures; drowning and exposure to contaminants and mold due to flooding and sea level rise; breathing problems, drinking water shortages, and increased water and air pollution during droughts and wildfires; and more mosquito- and tick-borne disease from rising temperatures and precipitation.

- **Mental health impacts**, including increased or worsened mental health problems due to high temperatures, traumatic or stressful experiences during and after extreme storms and flooding, trauma associated with the need to leave homes or communities damaged by sea level rise, and anxiety about climate change.

- **Health care system impacts**, including increased hospitalizations and health care costs from heat-related illness; power outages, facility damage, or hospital evacuation during extreme events; increased staffing needs for emergency response; and disrupted transportation and access to medical facilities due to flooding and sea level rise.

*Extreme weather events, like storms and flooding, can disrupt emergency services and access to hospitals.*
Many factors that affect New York State residents’ health and safety are not necessarily related to climate change. These factors can include high health care costs, lack of access to services, or lack of information on how to reduce health risks. However, climate hazards create considerable health and safety risks on top of these existing challenges.

**Adaptation and Resilience Strategies**

Strategies that emphasize the intersection between climate change impacts and public health can help communities build resilience. For example:

- Involving public health professionals in climate planning efforts can help communities better understand, monitor, and reduce their risks. Local health departments can educate residents and elected decision-makers about the health risks of climate change and ways to reduce them.

- Involving community members in local climate change and health initiatives, including planning and implementation, can help raise awareness about the health impacts of climate change and contribute valuable information to health departments.

- Planning and installing climate impact solutions that also provide mental and physical health benefits can help improve community health and resilience. For example, green spaces intended to reduce urban heat island temperatures and manage stormwater can also improve mental health by providing access to nature.

Public health efforts to address climate change must also be sustained to be effective. When a major public health crisis occurs, such as COVID-19, attention and resources tend to shift to that crisis. New York’s communities will need leadership, funding, and staffing to manage climate-related health issues while also managing other public health crises.

**Learn More**

Explore the New York State Climate Impacts Assessment at [https://nysclimateimpacts.org/](https://nysclimateimpacts.org/).