

## Death by Degrees: The health threats of climate change in Maine

The world is getting warmer at an unprecedented rate never before seen in recorded history. Climate fluctuations have occurred during previous centuries, but at the dawn of the 20th century, a warming trend took hold that shows no signs of stopping.

- The last several years have been the hottest since record keeping began
- 99% of the scientific community believe climate change is due to human activity
- Denial has no place in this crisis



### Health threats

We are already seeing increases in Lyme disease in Maine, but many more threats exist.

- Extreme weather events, such as ice storms, hurricanes, flooding, and storm surges, leading to more drownings, electrocutions and other accidental deaths
- Respiratory and cardiovascular disease, especially for those with asthma, due to increased air pollution
- Waterborne disease, such as intestinal distress from drinking contaminated water or consuming toxins
- Outbreaks of infectious disease spread by insects
- More incidents of heat-related disease, such as heat stroke.
- Injuries and deaths from forest fires intensified by droughts, hurricanes and other extreme weather conditions associated with global climate change.
- Arrival of climate refugees from other states and countries
- Depression, anxiety and anger caused by climate change disruptions



### Maine: A State At Risk

*The world is definitely warmer than it was 150 years ago, and the warming appears to have accelerated during recent decades. Many of my students are very concerned. They are worried about how these changes could affect their lives and, in the future, the lives of their children. I think their concern is justified. It's a dangerous game we're playing now, altering natural systems. - Dr Olaf Ellers, Bowdoin College, Brunswick ME*

Economically, Maine also has much at stake, as many residents make a living from natural resource industries, such as lumber, tourism, agriculture, and fishing. Each of these industries could be adversely impacted by global climate change, leading to possible job losses. Without sufficient income, some residents may be unable to afford health insurance.

Making matters worse, numerous Maine citizens already are vulnerable to the effects of climate change.

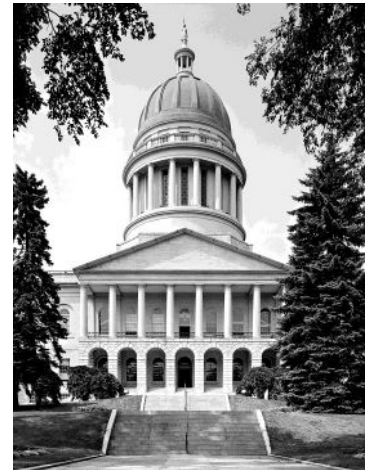
- Children - immune system, and other protective systems, have not yet fully developed, sensitivity to heat is greatest in children less than a year old
- People who are ill - sensitive to heat stress, air pollution, and other possible effects of global warming, certain medications, such as those taken for treatment of AIDS or kidney transplants, also increase sensitivity
- Elderly - especially those who are frail are at risk due to a host of factors, efficiency of their heat-regulating systems and perception of heat may be decreased, and pre-existing conditions, such as cardiovascular or pulmonary diseases, Maine now exceeds the national average of those 65 and older



### What You Can Do

*As a person becoming ill develops a fever as a sign, this planet has begun to show signs of illness, and human illness or death is certain to follow. History is full to overflowing with examples. The best action that can be taken to avoid tragedy, whether managing the illness of one or many, the earth or humanity, is early intervention. - Lani Graham, MD, MPH; PSR Maine Board Member and Former Director, Maine Bureau of Health*

- Support and use clean energy like solar
- Make your home and auto more energy efficient
- Try to eat more locally, organically, and plant-based foods (waste less)
- Urge the businesses you patronize to become energy-efficient
- Divest your investment portfolio of carbon producing stocks
- Demand a carbon tax to reduce emissions that are driving global warming
- Support candidates who are serious about reducing emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases
- Work with and/or support local groups and organizations to promote awareness of and advocate for global climate change policy
- Support efforts that require all power plants to meet federal air pollution standards



Check out the full Death by Degrees report on our website for more information.



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