The National Environmental Health Association (NEHA) represents more than 7,000 governmental, private, academic, and uniformed services sector environmental health professionals in the U.S., its territories, and internationally. NEHA is the profession's strongest advocate for excellence in the practice of environmental health as it delivers on its mission to build, sustain, and empower an effective environmental health workforce.

Policy Statement on Climate Change

Adopted: October 2020
Policy Sunset: October 2023

Climate change is affecting environmental health —the quality of air, food, and water in the communities where we live, work, and play (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2020). The National Environmental Health Association (NE HA) recognizes climate change as a Ð u › _ n Ð H • j Ï H › u j h j ¯ ñ _ • B ñ _ ¯ B • ˜ › u _ h • ¯ B ñ ¯ • B ñ £ • B ñ _ ¯ B • ñ j • £ ñ 9 ¯ Ö • communities. Environmental health professionals improve and protect the public's health and create and sustain healthy communit ies. It is NEHA's responsibility to support the capacity of environmental health professionals to address the health impacts of climate change with risk assessment, adaptation, and mitigation planning.

NEHA's Policy Statement

NEHA supports federal, state, and local funding for local and state health departments and environmental and health agencies to provide technical assistance, education, and programs to accomplish the following:

- Conduct risk assessments and establish plans to anticipate risks for adaptation and build resilience for future generations. Using the audience segmentation techniques identified by Maibach and coauthors (2008) will help professionals improve individual risk perceptions.
- Incorporate green space and other technologies into the built environment to help reduce urban heat island effects since urban areas are usually warmer than adjacent rural areas (Seto, Güneralp, & Hutyra, 2012; U.S. Global Change Research Program [USGCRP], c R • U j • ¯ B • £ B u › ¯ n • ¯ › h S • B ñ ¯ • Ð ñ Ï £ • ˜ u £ • ¯ B • : › ñ ¯ £ ¯ • ¯ B › ñ ¯ • ¯ hu h ñ j • B ñ _ ¯ B • · • ¯ u • ¯ B • H h ˜ ñ H › • ñ H › • š · ñ _ H ¯ Ö • ñ j • B ñ ¯ n › _ ñ ¯ • H populations (elderly, those with chronic diseases, low income, outdoor laborers, etc.) (Watts et al., 2015).
- Conserve and replenish water sources as they are limiting fact ors in all ecological cycles

Analysis

In 1997, NEHA adopted a climate change position paper that acknowledged the gravity of climate change, as well as the need for legislation and research, concerted action and cooperation, and environmental and public health professionals to be a resource (Radtke, Gist, & Wittkopf, 1997). Since then, additional evidence of climate change has been documented and the seriousness of

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those that are disproportionately

The benefits outweigh the economic consequences of delaying the implementation of climate change mitigation and adaptation policies. It will be costly either way, but the costs of delaying action is more costly as higher temperatures and higher CO_2 concentrations continue, as well as delays in policies that are implemented later will need to be more stringent and therefore more costly in future years (Furman & Podesta, 2014).

The key points to consider when determining the cost benefits include the following:

- Immediate action may reduce the cost of meeting climate targets. Mitigation costs increase by about 40% for each decade of delay.
- Delayed action may create substantial economic damages—0.9% of the estimated 2014 U.S. gross domestic product is approximately $150 billion and the next increase of one degree in mean annual temperature would incur an additional estimated annual cost of 1.2% of global output. These costs would incur year after year because of the damage caused by additional climate change as a result from delayed action (Furman & Podesta, 2014).
- Increases in change in the climate increases the need to act. Melting ice sheets causes sea levels to rise. Methane is released from thawing permafrost, which then accelerates global warming. These and other changes could have massive consequences and costs (Furman & Podesta, 2014).
- Enacting meaningful change in climate policy is a kind of climate insurance. Paying h H ¯ H : ñ ¯ H u j • u £ ¯ £ • j u Ð • › · £ • ¯ B • u £ • u 9 • _ ñ › : n £ ñ _ • B ñ j : £ • H j • is also an investment in cleaner air, energy security, and other in

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