



Date: March 2, 2009

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State Public Health Division launches new environmental health tool

The Oregon Public Health Division announced the launch today of a new tool to help examine the connections between environmental hazards and disease. The Environmental Public Health Tracking (EPHT) network will, for the first time, provide access to environmental and health information for Oregon from a single source. This web-based data query system is part of a national network led by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) that will provide similar data for 17 states across the US.

"The evidence is mounting that pollutants in our air, water, soil and food have an impact on our health," said Gail R. Shibley, Administrator of the Office of Environmental Public Health in the Oregon Department of Human Services Public Health Division. "Protecting the health of Oregonians from negative environmental impacts is a top priority, and the EPHT network will help us do that."

The Oregon EPHT network tracks key measures of environmental hazards, such as air and water quality, and also potentially related diseases, such as asthma and heart attacks. EPHT provides access to this information in a dynamic, web-based system that allows for the linkage of these measures for specific geographic areas in Oregon.

Momentum for a nationwide system like EPHT began in 2000, when the Pew Environmental Health Commission noted an "environmental health gap," a lack of basic information needed to document links between environmental hazards and disease. That observation came in part because the Commission found that the environmental public health system did not have the capability to respond adequately to environmental threats.

Since 2006, CDC has funded 17 states-- including Oregon -- and New York City to build state-based tracking networks.

For more information, please visit the Oregon EPHT network website:
www.healthoregon.org/epht.