



Are you concerned about asthma, maternal and child health, traffic, air pollution, or environmental justice?

Then you may be interested in the California Environmental Health Tracking Program's Alameda County Demonstration Project, which will:

- Track **birth outcomes, asthma, and traffic pollution** in Alameda County for 2001
- Examine at-risk populations and the possible connections between traffic pollution and asthma, pre-term birth, or low birth-weight
- Create materials that can be used for education, outreach, planning, advocacy, and public health action
- Provide communities with an opportunity to address health concerns regarding traffic related exposures

Join us! Your input is very important!

- Learn more about tracking and how it can be used to benefit your organization
- Provide important input on the development and utility of a tracking network
- Network with other organizations and learn more about their interests and efforts
- Learn more about traffic pollution, asthma, and birth outcomes in Alameda County
- Guide the development of materials that will suit your needs

Your participation will inform the development of a statewide environmental health tracking system to collect, integrate, analyze, interpret, and disseminate data about environmental hazards, exposure to environmental hazards, and health effects potentially related to environmental hazard exposures

For more information, please contact:

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Alameda County Demonstration Project: Frequently Asked Questions

California Environmental Health Tracking Program

Environmental Health Investigations Branch, CA DHS



What are EHIB and the California Environmental Health Tracking Program?

The Environmental Health Investigations Branch (EHIB) is part of the Division of Environmental and Occupational Disease Control within the California Department of Health Services. EHIB investigates pollution and other toxics in California and their potential effects on health, answers questions regarding environmental health concerns, and provides outreach and education to the public.

In 2002, California received funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to begin planning a statewide environmental health tracking network. This collaborative effort between EHIB, Cal/EPA, and the University of California to design a tracking network is called the California Environmental Health Tracking Program (CEHTP). A Planning Consortium comprised of over 50 representatives from NGOs and public agencies in California provides key input on CEHTP activities.

The goal of CEHTP is to develop a plan for a coordinated and integrated standards-based statewide Environmental Health Tracking Network which will allow for monitoring, reporting, and linkage of health effects, environmental hazards, and exposure data and which will enable public health action.

What is tracking and why is it important?

There is a critical gap in knowledge about chronic diseases and potentially associated environmental factors. Because some hazards and chronic diseases are not monitored, and current systems that do exist may be inadequate and/or may not be linked together, it is difficult to study and monitor relationships among hazards, exposures, and health effects. The Pew Environmental Health Commission calls this lack of critical knowledge, "the environmental health gap." Without this knowledge, California will continue to use costly treatments to fight chronic disease rather than use cost-effective preventions that save our communities from the economic, emotional, and social costs of disease.

Environmental Health Tracking is the ongoing systematic *collection, integration, analysis, interpretation, and dissemination* of data about environmental hazards, exposure to environmental hazards, and health effects potentially related to exposure to environmental hazards. In 2001, California became the first state to pass legislation to establish an environmental health tracking network (SB 702).

Establishing a network to track environmental exposure and diseases afflicting Californians will allow us to:

- Identify populations at risk and respond to outbreaks, clusters and emerging threats
- Establish the relationships between environmental hazards and disease
- Guide intervention and prevention strategies, including lifestyle improvements
- Identify, reduce and prevent harmful environmental risks
- Improve the public health basis for policymaking
- Enable the public's right to know about health and the environment
- Track progress towards achieving a healthier nation and environment

What is the Alameda County Demonstration project all about?

The project will serve as a "road test" of an environmental health tracking system in order to determine both the possibilities and the limitations in establishing and utilizing a tracking system.

The project will track birth outcomes, asthma, and traffic pollution in Alameda County for 2001 using CA Vital Statistics, Kaiser Permanente, MediCal, and CalTrans data. This information will be centralized and processed, and the results will be used to:

- Explore the locations of at-risk populations and their exposure to traffic pollution
- Examine the possible connections between traffic pollution and asthma, pre-term birth, or low birthweight
- Investigate methods for measuring asthma in populations
- Create materials that can be used for education, outreach, planning, and public health action
- Provide communities with an opportunity to address health concerns regarding traffic related exposures

Why is the demonstration project important?

In addition to providing information about the status of and relationships between **birth outcomes, asthma, and traffic pollution** in Alameda County, the demonstration project will inform the development of a statewide environmental health tracking system that can guide research and public health action. From this project, we will be able to:

- Explore the information and tracking needs of CBOs, NGOs, and county agencies
- Investigate potential uses of tracking to further community goals and promote environmental justice
- Evaluate the feasibility of ongoing surveillance using routinely collected data sources
- Consider the benefits and costs of a tracking system
- Determine how lessons learned may be applied to tracking other hazards and chronic diseases

Why is tracking and the demonstration project important to my organization?

Information from a tracking network may help your organization with a variety of activities, including planning, research, advocacy, outreach, education, and providing services. The demonstration project serves as a model for the statewide tracking network. The lessons learned from the demonstration project will inform the design and creation of this tracking network, which will consider a range of environmental hazards and health outcomes.

The demonstration project may produce results and materials that will be useful for your organization. Although we recognize that there is the possibility the results may not be useful, we aim to contribute positively to the efforts of various organizations. Involving stakeholders at the county and community level ensures that the materials we produce are as useful as possible and allows us to determine how we can better collaborate with other organizations.

What do you want me to do?

An essential part of this project is to receive guidance and feedback from stakeholders that use environmental health information to improve the public's health. Without this input, it will be difficult to create a tracking network that fulfills its potential as a resource for all organizations, particularly those which directly serve the community. For this reason, we would like for you or someone from your organization to participate in a stakeholder input process and guide our efforts to create such an environmental health tracking network.

Participants will also be among the first to learn about and provide feedback on results and materials from our analysis of birth outcomes, asthma, and traffic pollution in Alameda County for 2001. This stakeholder input process will consist of five meetings spaced over a sixteen-month period from January 2004 until April 2005. Because each meeting will build upon the previous meeting, we ask that the same representative from your organization participate in all five meetings, sending a replacement only when necessary.

What is the time commitment for participating?

Again, because this is an interactive and cumulative process, it is to the benefit of each participant and of the group as a whole that all participants make the commitment to try to attend all five meetings or to send a replacement if needed. We request that participants attend a series of five meetings, which will be held between January 2004 and April 2005.

Each meeting will last approximately four hours. We will be able to provide food and reimburse transportation costs for all participants, as well as provide a small participation stipend for representatives from CBOs and small NGOs.

The first meeting is scheduled for Thursday, January 22nd from 12:30 pm - 4:45 pm and will be located at the state building in downtown Oakland. We know that people are busy, but we hope you can participate because this process will be very important to the creation of a tracking program, which will be essential to improving health for all Californians.

How will my organization benefit from participating?

The benefits to participating in this process include:

- Learning more about tracking and how it can be used to benefit your organization
- Opportunity to provide important input on the development and utility of a tracking network
- Networking with other organizations and learning more about their interests and efforts
- Learning more about traffic pollution, asthma, and birth outcomes in Alameda County
- Results of demonstration project may enhance your organization's work
- Opportunity to guide the development of materials that will suit your needs
- Opportunity for stakeholder group to form a coordinated action plan
- Opportunity to get to know the state's environmental health branch

Who else is involved in this effort?

We anticipate that our stakeholder process will include representatives from CBOs and NGOs from Alameda County; county departments of public health, environmental health, and urban planning; and other stakeholder groups including the EPA, air district, offices of city and county elected officials, truck groups, etc. We welcome input on this effort.

Our partners in this effort include the Pacific Institute, California Center for Vital Statistics, the Medical Care Statistics Section of DHS, Kaiser Permanente, CalTrans, and the University of California Center of Excellence for Environmental Public Health Tracking.

When should I let you know my decision?

As soon as possible, preferably by the beginning of January so that we can begin planning for the meeting and arranging for stipends and food.

Where can I get more information about the demonstration project, CEHTP, and tracking in general?

For more information about the project and the stakeholder input process, please contact the project's health educator, Michelle Wong, at (510) 622-4479 or mwong@dhs.ca.gov.

For specific questions regarding data collection and analysis, please contact the project manager, Eric Roberts, at (510) 622-4534 or erobert1@dhs.ca.gov.

You can also learn more about the tracking and the California Environmental Health Tracking Program on our website: www.catracking.com

California Environmental Health Tracking Program

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Hello [REDACTED]

I was delighted to speak with you on [REDACTED] and to find that you are interested in participating in the California Environmental Health Tracking Program's (CEHTP) Alameda County Pilot Project stakeholder input process. As we discussed:

-The Alameda County pilot project will examine birth outcomes, asthma, and traffic pollution in Alameda County for 2001. It will also explore the locations of at-risk populations, their exposure to traffic pollution, and the potential health impacts.

-The project plans to convene a working group of CBOs and NGOs from Alameda County; county departments of public health, environmental health, and urban planning; and other stakeholder groups including the EPA, air district, offices of city and county elected officials. This group will collaborate to provide input on the project results and to guide CEHTP in the creation of materials based on these results that can be used by a variety of audiences for education, outreach, planning, advocacy, and public health action.

-This stakeholder input process is essential to informing the development of a statewide environmental health tracking system that can guide research and public health action.

I hope you or someone from your organization can participate in this stakeholder input process and guide efforts to create the state's Environmental Health Tracking Network. This project would benefit greatly from your organization's knowledge and commitment to [REDACTED]. Participating in the stakeholder group will also provide you with an opportunity to help design and receive some helpful materials, as well as to connect with groups working on similar issues.

The first meeting is scheduled for Thursday, January 22nd from 12:30 pm - 4:45 pm and will be located at the State Building in downtown Oakland (1515 Clay Street, Room 2). There will be four additional meetings over the course of sixteen months.

I am attaching a list of Frequently Asked Questions that may be of help to you and any of your colleagues who may be interested in this project. Feel free to contact me with any additional questions or concerns. Please also feel free to contact Michelle Wong, the Health Educator for this project at CEHTP.

Thank you for your interest. We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,
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