

Connecting Climate Change and Health



Why businesses should care about Climate and Health - The Business Imperative

The health of the workforce and community is integral to successful, thriving businesses. By taking action to address climate-related risks, businesses can enhance their resilience and contribute to a healthier and more sustainable future.

Climate change poses risks to the well-being of employees, customers, and communities. By evaluating these risks and implementing strategies to address them, businesses play an essential role in protecting human health and can achieve the following:

Business stability: Extreme weather events and other impacts of climate change disrupt business operations and supply chains. Businesses can identify potential disruptions and develop strategies to mitigate them and ensure business continuity.

Meeting stakeholder expectations: Customers, investors, and other stakeholders increasingly expect businesses to address the risks posed by climate change. Businesses can meet these expectations and enhance their reputation and brand value.

Reducing costs: By reducing their environmental impact and improving resource efficiency, businesses can lower operating costs and improve profitability. Evaluating climate-related risk can help businesses identify opportunities for cost savings and efficiency improvements.

Supporting sustainable development: Climate change is a global challenge that requires collective action. Implementing sustainable business strategies can contribute to the transition to a low-carbon, sustainable economy.

5 Steps for businesses to better align climate and health

1. LEARN

Learn more about how climate change impacts health. The American Public Health Association has named climate change one of the largest current threats to health. Climate change endangers health through exposure to extreme heat, drought, wildfires, air pollution, sea level rise, flooding, severe weather events, and food security. (source: <https://www.apha.org/topics-and-issues/climate-change/guide>)

Build your knowledge: Stay informed about the latest scientific research and data on how climate change impacts health. Explore studies, reports, and publications from reputable sources such as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) or relevant public health organizations. Understand the specific health risks and vulnerabilities associated with climate change.

Understand climate and environmental conditions and health indicators:

- *Monitor climate-related indicators* such as temperature, humidity, air quality, and disease patterns in the regions where the company operates to understand relevant environmental risks.
- *Review community health indicators:* Assess community-level health indicators and data to understand the potential health vulnerabilities experienced by your employees, stakeholders, and community. Consider demographic factors, socioeconomic conditions, geographic location, and pre-existing health conditions. Identify any groups that may be particularly

susceptible to climate-related health impacts, such as the elderly, children, or marginalized populations.

Recognize your organization's impact: Assess and quantify the environmental and climate impacts related to your operations, starting with considering factors such as greenhouse gas emissions, air pollution, water contamination, and waste. Improving the health of our workforce and communities starts with understanding how to reduce harms stemming from your own business operations.

2. EVALUATE

Companies can gain a better understanding of how climate change poses risks to the health and well-being of their employees, customers, and communities by following these steps. This knowledge can inform targeted actions and interventions to mitigate organizational risks and build climate resilience.

Conduct a comprehensive organizational risk assessment: Identify how environmental and climate risks, such as extreme weather events, heatwaves, air pollution, water scarcity, and vector-borne diseases, can directly or indirectly impact the health and well-being of your communities.

- *Assess the vulnerability and exposure* of employees, customers, and communities to climate change-related health risks.
- *Analyze health and safety incident data*, such as employee sick leave records, workers' compensation claims, or customer complaints related to health issues. Look for patterns or trends that may indicate climate change-related health risks or impacts.
- *Consider the indirect impacts* of climate change on health and well-being. This includes assessing how climate-related disruptions, such as extreme weather events or resource scarcity, can affect health determinants such as access to healthcare, mental health, food security, or housing in the communities where the company operates.

3. ENGAGE

Research shows that 65% of consumers expect companies to act on societal issues, including climate action. Millennial and GenZ consumers now rank climate change and protecting the environment as their top concerns. Engage with stakeholders, including employees, customers, investors, and communities, to raise awareness about the health impacts of climate change and develop strategies to address them. Effective stakeholder engagement is an ongoing process that requires active listening, responsiveness, and continuous communication.

Identify and engage with stakeholders to build a shared understanding and collaborative approach to address the health impacts of climate change. This engagement can provide valuable insights and help identify specific risks and needs. Here are some ways to effectively engage stakeholders:

- Surveys and interviews
- Workshops and focus groups
- Employee engagement programs

Involve employees for impact. Assess their awareness of climate and health issues and listen to what is important to them. Ask if leadership is meeting their expectations for protecting the environment. Consider hosting a training on climate and health impacts and opportunities for action.

Communicate openly and transparently about your organization's work around the health impacts of climate change. Keep stakeholders and communities updated about your efforts.

- *Customer engagement initiatives:* Raise awareness about the health impacts of climate change. Use marketing campaigns, social media platforms, or newsletters to communicate information, tips, and resources related to climate change and health. Seek customer feedback on their concerns and expectations regarding climate-related health issues.
- *Investor communications:* Incorporate climate-related health risks and strategies into sustainability reports, annual meetings, or investor presentations. Highlight the financial implications of climate-related health risks and how your company is proactively managing them.
- *Share successes and lessons learned:* Celebrate success stories from community collaborations to inspire others and highlight the importance of integrating health and equity into climate actions. Share lessons learned and best practices with other communities and stakeholders to encourage scaling of successful approaches.

4. COLLABORATE

Climate change does not impact all communities equally, and businesses can play an important role in promoting equity through their climate actions. By collaborating with communities, acknowledging their expertise, and integrating their perspectives, organizations can ensure that climate actions address the specific health and equity challenges faced by those most impacted by climate change. This approach fosters a sense of inclusivity and empowerment, ultimately leading to more effective and sustainable outcomes.

Build relationships: Establish meaningful relationships with community leaders, organizations, and residents. Seek to understand their priorities, needs, and challenges related to climate change, health, and equity. Engage in open and respectful dialogue to build trust and establish a foundation for collaboration.

- *Listen and learn:* Actively listen to community members and learn from their experiences. Create opportunities for community input through focus groups, town hall meetings, or surveys. Seek to understand how climate change impacts their health and well-being, particularly vulnerable populations disproportionately affected by environmental and social disparities.
- *Foster partnerships:* Collaborate with community-based organizations, public health agencies, academic institutions, and other relevant stakeholders to leverage expertise and resources. Support organizations and community-led initiatives that address health, climate, and equity.

5. ACT

Bringing it all together - how businesses can make a meaningful difference around climate change and health. Remember to tailor the approach to your organization's unique context and leverage available opportunities for meaningful impact.

Reduce organizational climate impacts: Begin by conducting a greenhouse gas inventory to assess and quantify emissions from direct and indirect sources, then set ambitious reduction goals. Improve energy efficiency by conducting audits, upgrading equipment, and optimizing HVAC systems. Transition to renewable energy through on-site installations, renewable energy certificates, or power purchase agreements. Encourage sustainable commuting and adopt electric or hybrid fleet vehicles. Minimize waste and promote circularity through waste reduction programs and sustainable packaging. Engage suppliers and value chain partners to reduce emissions throughout the lifecycle of products/services. Stay informed about emerging technologies, policy changes, and best practices to enhance your organization's climate resilience and adaptability.

Develop mitigation and adaptation strategies: Develop and implement strategies to reduce risks and promote the health and well-being of employees, customers, and communities. This may involve improving workplace safety protocols, providing training on climate-related health risks, enhancing emergency response plans, promoting sustainable practices, or supporting community resilience initiatives.

Monitor and evaluate: Continuously monitor the effectiveness of the implemented strategies and regularly evaluate their impact on the health and well-being of stakeholders. Update the assessment periodically to account for changing climate conditions, emerging risks, or new scientific findings. Use feedback mechanisms and performance indicators to track progress and make necessary adjustments.

Incorporate community and stakeholder input into strategy development: Collaborate on identifying strategies that address climate impacts while promoting health equity, such as access to clean air, safe housing, green spaces, and quality healthcare. Actively listen to stakeholder perspectives and incorporate their input into the development of strategies to address climate-related health impacts. Consider their priorities, concerns, and recommendations to ensure that strategies are inclusive, relevant, and effective. Including the community voice in climate action plans can be a powerful tool for driving equity in our communities.

Provide education and resources: Offer educational materials, online resources, or webinars to stakeholders, providing information on the health impacts of climate change and actions they can take to protect their health. Empower stakeholders to make informed decisions and contribute to climate resilience efforts.

Support community resources and capacity-building: Offer resources, training, and capacity-building opportunities to community members to enhance their understanding of climate change, health impacts, and equitable solutions. This may include workshops on climate resilience, health advocacy, sustainable practices, and community organizing. Provide support for community-led projects that align with climate action and health equity goals. This may involve funding opportunities, technical assistance, or mentorship programs to empower communities to implement their own solutions.

Continuously engage, adapt, and improve: Regularly review and reassess your sustainability goals, strategies, and practices. Maintain ongoing communication and engagement with the community throughout the process. Foster a culture of continuous learning, adaptation, and improvement. Regularly reassess priorities and adjust strategies as necessary to ensure they remain aligned with community health and equity goals.

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Explore These Climate Change Resources

Why we care about connecting climate change and health



[Climate change and health are Interconnected](#)



[Healthy people healthy environment](#)

Learn about climate change's impact on health



[Climate change 101](#)



[Health impacts of climate change](#)



[EcoAmerica](#)

Engage stakeholders to raise awareness and develop strategies to address health impacts



[How to engage employees in climate action](#)



[How to harness employee power for climate goals](#)

Collaborate with communities to align climate action with equity work



[Dig deeper into meaningful community engagement](#)



[Understand the disproportionate environmental hazards in your communities](#)



[Kaiser Permanente Community Health Data Platform](#)



[Consider completing a Community Health Needs Assessment to inform your climate action](#)

