




History

This page contains information about and historical documents from the early years of the National Environmental Public Health Tracking Program.

2001: The Need 

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In January 2001, the Pew Environmental Health Commission issued the report [“America’s Environmental Health Gap: Why the Country Needs a Nationwide Health Tracking Network.”](#)   [PDF 30 Kb] The report, which stated that the existing environmental health system is neither adequate nor well organized, recommended the creation of a “Nationwide Health Tracking Network for disease and exposures.”

At that time, no systems existed at the state or national level to track many of the exposures and health effects that may be related to environmental hazards. In addition, in most cases, existing environmental hazard, exposure, and disease tracking systems were not linked together. Because existing systems were not linked, it was difficult to study and monitor relationships among hazards, exposures, and health effects. The Tracking Network is CDC’s answer to these issues.

2002-2005: Development 

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From 2002 to 2005, Congress provided funding to CDC for pilot projects. CDC began working with state and local health departments, federal partners, professional partners, and community groups to lay the foundation for a system to track environmental hazards and the health problems they may cause.

In fiscal year 2002, Congress provided CDC with initial funding to:

- begin developing a nationwide environmental public health tracking network
- develop capacity in environmental health within state and local health departments.

CDC’s goal was to develop a tracking system that integrates data about environmental hazards and exposures with data about diseases that are possibly linked to the environment. This system allows federal, state, and local agencies, and others to:

- monitor and distribute information about environmental hazards and disease trends
- advance research on possible linkages between environmental hazards and disease
- develop, implement, and evaluate regulatory and public health actions to prevent or control environment-related diseases.

Planning for an environmental public health tracking network was an important priority for CDC because of the opportunity it would provide to address some of the most challenging problems facing local, state, and national public health leaders. From the outset, this activity has involved substantial collaboration between CDC and public health and environmental partners. Read [memoranda of understanding](#).

CDC assembled four workgroups to develop recommendations for the Environmental Public Health Tracking Program. The workgroups included representatives from 30 organizations, including the following:

- Federal agencies

- State and local public health and environment agencies
- Non-governmental organizations
- Academic institutions.

The workgroups addressed the following topics:

- Organization and management
- Data technology and tracking methodology
- Tracking system inventory and needs assessment
- Policy, and public health action.

See the [Tracking Network Workgroup Report](#) [PDF - 161 KB] for further details.

2006-2010: Implementation

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The Tracking Program focused on launching national and state networks through building national infrastructure, workforce, and collaborations on data linkage.

Though the program began in 2002, the actual online [Environmental Public Health Tracking Network](#) launched in 2009. This dynamic, web-based system of data and information is helping draw a clear picture of the intricate relationships between environment and health.

Read [Keeping Track, Promoting Health](#), which highlights the successes and challenges of the first four years of the Tracking Program.

2011-2015: Growth & Enhancement

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This period was focused on expanding the [Environmental Public Health Tracking Network](#) by adding new data, functionality, states, and data-use activities and incorporating changes as a result of evaluation.

During this time, the Tracking Program celebrated its 10th anniversary. Check out [A Decade of Tracking](#) for highlights from the first 10 years.

Archived Documents

Archived Documents

2004

- [Tracking Network Vision Document \(2004\)](#)
This document provides a vision for the Environmental Public Health Tracking Network. The document is designed to 1) describe, at a conceptual level, the function and purpose of the Tracking Network, 2) provide a profile of the stakeholders and users of the Network, and 3) outline the major features of the Tracking Network.
- [2004 At A Glance](#)
Information about CDC's yearly goals, program development, funding allocations, related projects and future directions.
- [HELIX-Atlanta \(2004\)](#)  [PDF - 386 KB]
HELIX (Health and Environment Linked for Information Exchange) is an effort being lead by CDC to demonstrate the process for developing a local environmental public health tracking surveillance network that integrates information

systems related to non-infectious health effects and environmental data.

- [PHASE \(2004\)](#)


PHASE (Public Health Air Surveillance Evaluation) is a collaboration among EPA, CDC and state partners to link air quality data to health data and environmental data.

2005

- [CDC's Strategy for the National Tracking Program \(Fiscal Years 2005-2010\)](#)  [PDF – 1 MB]

Defines the vision, mission, and five goals that set the direction of the Tracking Program

- [Environmental Public Health Tracking and Biomonitoring \(2005\)](#)  [PDF – 154 KB]

Biomonitoring is an essential component of the National Environmental Public Health Tracking Network. Tracking must include data on environmental hazards, human exposure, and health effects. The most health-relevant method of determining human exposure to environmental hazards is biomonitoring. Laboratory personnel bring new ideas and concepts to the Tracking Network. See also [Linking: Hazards, Exposures, and Health Effects](#)  [PDF – 1 MB] which has information about linking biomonitoring and environmental public health tracking with particular focus on hazards, exposures, and health effects.

- [A GeoPrimer: Environmental Public Health Tracking \(Version 1.0\)](#)  [PDF – 2 MB]

A resource for Tracking managers and a tool for their technical staff prepared by the Geography and Locational Referencing Subgroup of the Standards and Network Development Workgroup of the National Tracking Program, CDC.

2006

- [Tracking's National Network Implementation Plan \(2006\)](#)  [PDF – 1 MB]

The NNIP outlines CDC's strategy for developing and implementing the Tracking Network by clarifying functions and components and describing approaches to developing the components. Specifically, the NNIP

- describes the background, context, needs, and goals of the Tracking Network;
- outlines the principal functions and components of the Tracking Network;
- discusses the steps needed to implement the components; and
- identifies the entities responsible for taking the implementation steps.

2007

- [2007 At-A-Glance](#)  [PDF – 362 KB]

Information about CDC's yearly goals, program development, funding allocations, related projects and future directions.

- [Timeline: Technical Network Implementation Plan](#)  [PDF – 1 MB]

This timeline outlines the major activities and milestones in the Technical Network Implementation Plan (TNIP). The timeline is a living document and will be updated periodically as experience is gained and as the components of the Network are refined and implemented