

# What You Can Do as a Health Professional Before and After the Annual Meeting

for the sake of our health and the health of our climate



## 1. Contact your mayor, city/county representatives, state representatives, and federal representatives and demand aggressive climate action.



[Sixty-four percent of Americans](#) view health professionals as a trusted source of information about the health effects of climate change.



Research has shown that framing climate change as a public health conversation can be more effective than other framings, such as an environmental or national security threat.<sup>1</sup>

APHA is committed to supporting policies and practices in the built and natural environment that advance physical and mental health. Through the [joint call to action promoting healthy communities](#), we are working with partner organizations from the built environment sector to accelerate the implementation of health-supportive design. In the global health arena, APHA promotes [access to safe water and sanitation for all](#).

Climate change is a key focus of APHA's environmental health activities.

- The policy statement "[Public Health Opportunities to Address the Health Effects of Climate Change](#)" describes how #ClimateChangesHealth and how public health can reduce greenhouse gas emissions and promote resilience.
- 2017, the "[Year of Climate Change and Health](#)", aimed to increase awareness among APHA members and partners about the central role of public health to effect climate change policy and practice: in terms of both mitigation and adaptation.

This document and companion factsheets "[What you can do at the APHA annual meeting](#)" and "[How APHA is greening the annual meeting](#)" share opportunities for APHA membership to enhance their environmental stewardship, reduce their carbon footprint, and learn about ways that APHA is reducing the environmental impact of the Annual Meeting.



## 2. Purchase clean energy from your utility company, and ask your employer to do the same.



Electricity is responsible for [29 percent of total U.S. greenhouse gas emissions](#). Coal power plants generate [34 percent of electricity](#) in the U.S. while accounting for [70 percent of the sector's greenhouse gas emissions](#).



Converting all coal-fired power plants to solar energy would avoid ~52,000 premature deaths in the U.S.<sup>2</sup>



## 3. Forgo travel — particularly air travel — when meeting/working online or on the phone will suffice. If you are not able to attend APHA in person, attend virtually.<sup>5</sup>



Avoiding air travel avoids the equivalent, on average, of 0.6 tons of CO<sub>2</sub> for a round-trip medium-length flight and 1.6 tons of CO<sub>2</sub> for a round-trip transatlantic flight.<sup>3</sup>



The ozone and fine particulate matter air pollution generated by aviation has been linked to up to 1,500 premature deaths and \$7 billion in related health costs in North America each year.<sup>4</sup>



## 4. Follow Michael Pollan's mantra — "Eat food. Not too much. Mostly plants."



Agricultural activities account for [8 percent of greenhouse gas emissions in the U.S.](#) Purchasing local food can reduce your meal's carbon footprint by up to 11 percent<sup>5</sup> and help [maintain the natural balance of local nutrients](#) like nitrogen and phosphorus. Organic farming increases the concentration of carbon contained in the soil<sup>6</sup> and reduces exposure to pesticides<sup>7</sup> among vulnerable populations such as children.



Shifting to a diet emphasizing fruits, vegetables, nuts and whole grains can lower the risk of cardiovascular disease<sup>8</sup> and reduce your food-related carbon footprint by one-half.<sup>9</sup> Choose free-range or wild-caught fish and [follow storage and preparation guidelines](#) to minimize the risk of foodborne disease.



## 5. Boycott companies that are impeding climate solutions — Publicly let them know why, as a health professional, you are boycotting them.



In 2016, APHA committed to divest from fossil fuels, and the [World Medical Association](#) called for divesting fossil fuel companies in favor of renewable energy due to the burden of disease from air pollution: [1 in 8 deaths globally](#).

## References

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For science. For action. For health.

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