



#ClimateChangesHealth

Southwest CLIMATE AND HEALTH

BACKGROUND

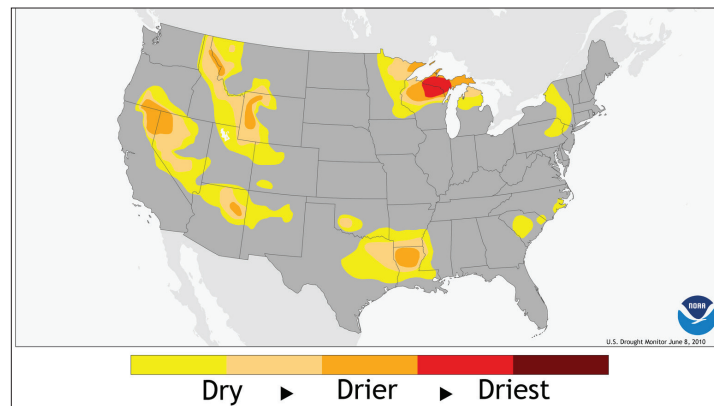
Burning fossil fuels, such as coal and gas, releases carbon dioxide. CO₂ builds up in the atmosphere and causes Earth's temperatures to rise. This extra, trapped heat disrupts many of the interconnected systems in our environment, posing risks to human health. Some impacts of climate change are already being felt throughout the United States. We need to safeguard our communities by protecting people's health from the effects of climate change.

ISSUE SUMMARIES

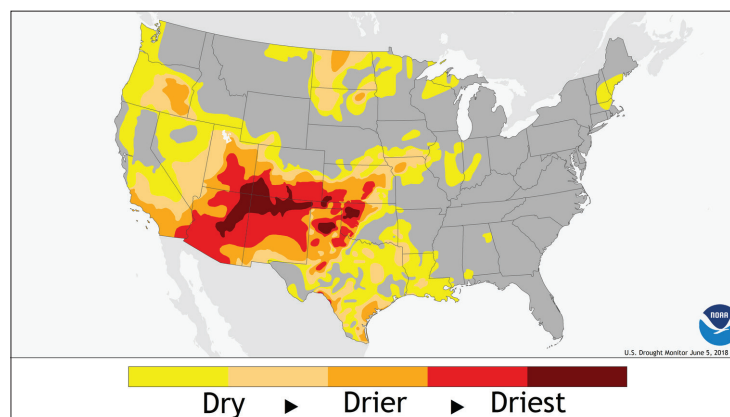
DROUGHT AND WILDFIRES

Droughts increase the likelihood of health hazards like wildfires, dust storms, extreme heat events, flash floods and degraded air and water quality. Drought threatens water supplies and ecosystems, contributing to increased food prices that disproportionately affect low-income individuals. Exposure to wildfire smoke and dust storms increases respiratory and cardiovascular hospitalizations, asthma, bronchitis, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and medical visits for lung illnesses and respiratory infections.

DROUGHT IN JUNE, 2010



DROUGHT IN JUNE, 2018



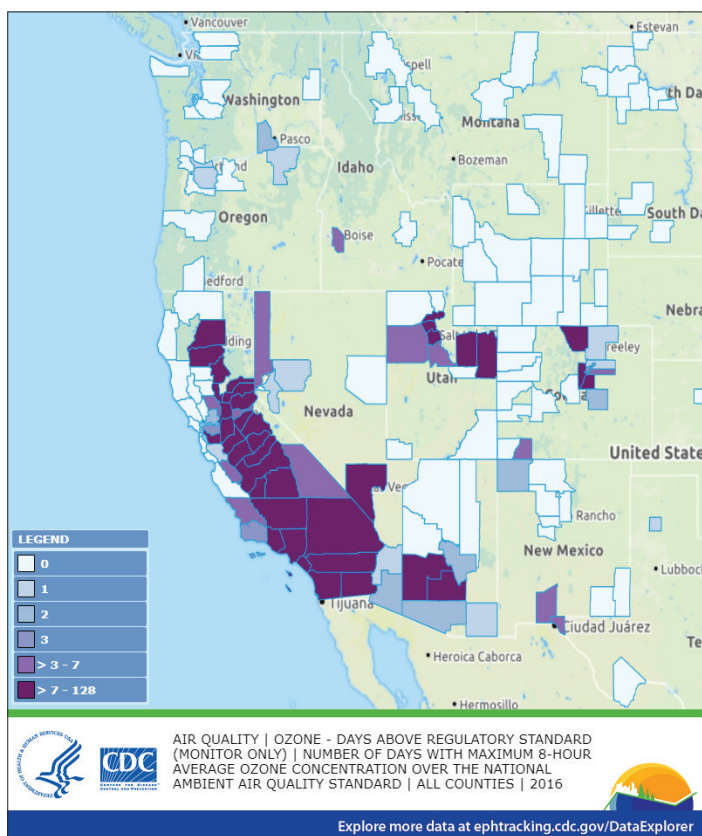
EXTREME HEAT

Extreme heat leads to increased hospitalizations and, sometimes, fatal health events. Children, the elderly, people with chronic diseases, low-income populations and outdoor workers are at the highest risk for heat-related illnesses. Extreme heat is also linked to increased aggression, raising the incidence of assaults, murders and suicides.

AIR POLLUTION

Climate change is increasing ground-level ozone and other types of air pollution. Smog, air toxics, particulate matter and climate-changing gases such as CO₂ harm health. Smog makes it hard to breathe and worsens certain health conditions. Air toxics and particulate matter can cause increased hospitalizations, asthma, bronchitis, heart attacks, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and premature death.

DAYS ABOVE OZONE REGULATORY STANDARD, 2014



Source: The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

FAST FACTS



In the Southwest, over 90% of the population lives in cities, increasing residents' vulnerability to heat-related illnesses caused by urban heat islands.



The Southwest's 1.5 million Native Americans and 182 federally recognized tribes are among the nation's most climate-sensitive populations due to their high rates of poverty and unemployment.



Climate change aggravates asthma symptoms, impacting 9.9% of adults in New Mexico, compared to the national average of 7% of adults.



In 2018, heat-related illness accounted for 182 deaths in Phoenix, Arizona, the highest number of heat deaths in 13 years.