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Adaptation and solution

Building Human Resilience: The Role of Public Health Preparedness and Response As an Adaptation to Climate Change

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Abstract

Global climate change will increase the probability of extreme weather events, including heatwaves, drought, wildfire, cyclones, and heavy precipitation that could cause floods and landslides. Such events create significant public health needs that can exceed local capacity to respond, resulting in excess morbidity or mortality and in the declaration of disasters. Human vulnerability to any disaster is a complex phenomenon with social, economic, health, and cultural dimensions. Vulnerability to natural disasters has two sides: the degree of exposure to dangerous hazards (susceptibility) and the capacity to cope with or recover from disaster consequences (resilience). Vulnerability reduction programs reduce susceptibility and increase resilience. Susceptibility to disasters is reduced largely by prevention and mitigation of emergencies. Emergency preparedness and response and recovery activities—including those that address climate

and response and recovery activitiesâ€” including those that address climate changeâ€”increase disaster resilience. Because adaptation must occur at the community level, local public health agencies are uniquely placed to build human resilience to climate-related disasters. This article discusses the role of public health in reducing human vulnerability to climate change within the context of select examples for emergency preparedness and response.



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