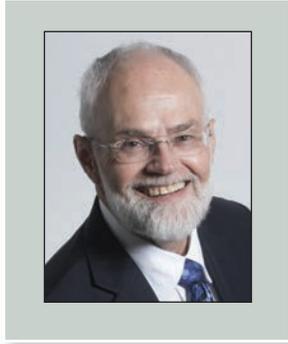


## ► PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Vince Radke, MPH, RS,  
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## The Impacts of Climate Change Are at Our Doorstep

Climate change refers to “any significant change in measures of climate (such as temperature or precipitation) lasting for an extended period (decades or longer)” (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 2016, p. 3).

In 1997, some 20 years ago, the National Environmental Health Agency (NEHA) adopted a climate change position paper. In 2017, NEHA adopted an updated climate change policy statement. In between those years, additional research and evidence have been documented that indicate climate change is continuing to have an impact on our lives. I suggest we all read the NEHA policy statement on climate change (see references for the link).

Climate change is impacting all aspects of our environmental health work—air, water, vector control, food, safety, and the built environment. The communities where we work and live are being impacted. We must address this impact now. We can address this impact with risk assessment, monitoring, planning, education, and adaptation. If you have not started to address this impact of climate change in your community, you must start now.

There are several resources available to us. The *Lancet* Commission on Health and Climate Change has proposed 10 policy recommendations that can aid us, as environmental health professionals, to help our communities make changes to mitigate some of the impacts of climate change (Watts et al., 2015). The National Association of County and City Health Officials (2014) has produced a report that summarizes the results from local health department directors on the existence, causes,

*We can no longer stand on the doorstep.*

and dangers of climate change. The report also discusses the prioritization and capacity to assess and address the impacts of climate change. An additional resource is the Building Resilience Against Climate Effects (BRACE) framework (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2015). The framework's five-step process anticipates impacts, assesses associated health vulnerabilities, and creates adaptive capacity to reduce exposures.

As environmental health professionals, we cannot assess and address the impacts of climate change by ourselves. This effort will take our entire communities, as well as other levels of government, nongovernmental organizations, policy makers, and the private sector. As environmental health professionals, part of our effort with other partners will be to show both the health and economic burden of climate change. Baseline data on exposure and disease, if not available, will need to be obtained to quantify the impacts of climate change. Environmental health surveillance activities will need to be undertaken to monitor changes over time. Those populations already affected by socioeconomic inequities will be disproportionately burdened by the impacts of climate change. Efforts must be made to monitor and develop appropriate measures for these communities.

In September 2016, NEHA participated in a national online survey sponsored by ecoAmerica and Climate for Health to determine member attitudes and behaviors on climate change. NEHA invited its members to participate in the online survey and 277 NEHA members responded to the survey. The survey was also sent out nationally to others across the U.S. It should be noted that NEHA members self-selected and the respondents might not reflect a representative sample of the association's membership. Due to space limitations, I will present just a few results from the survey. The entire survey report can be found at [www.neha.org/sites/default/files/eh-topics/climate-change/ecoAmerica\\_Climate\\_Survey\\_NEHA\\_US\\_Results\\_Sum\\_2016\\_09.pdf](http://www.neha.org/sites/default/files/eh-topics/climate-change/ecoAmerica_Climate_Survey_NEHA_US_Results_Sum_2016_09.pdf).

- 83% of NEHA members believe climate change is happening (versus 83% nationally).
- 78% of NEHA members agree we need to take action now to reduce pollution that is causing climate change (versus 80% nationally).
- 90% of NEHA members believe clean water is a critical right to all (versus 90% nationally).
- 89% of NEHA members have discussed climate change with friends and family (versus 69% nationally).

In closing, I would like to quote the final paragraph of NEHA's policy statement on climate change (2017):

Addressing climate change can be an overwhelming and daunting task, but when all individuals in a community engage, prepare, and collaborate on effective climate change strategies, then

partnerships and solutions arise. Evaluating baseline opinions, values, core beliefs, and identities of a community's diverse population will allow environmental health professionals to better understand how and where behavior change can produce maximum results. Promoting long-term planning for climate change is important. Communities must create and be examples of more efficient and sustainable lifestyles, such as using active and mass transportation, reducing waste, and conserving energy and water. (pp. 4–5)

We can no longer stand on the doorstep. 🐼

## References

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- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. (2016). *Climate change indicators in the United States, 2016, fourth edition* (EPA 430-R-16-004). Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved from [https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2016-08/documents/climate\\_indicators\\_2016.pdf](https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2016-08/documents/climate_indicators_2016.pdf)
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*Vince* \_\_\_\_\_  
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## Did You Know?

NEHA and ecoAmerica's Climate for Health have developed a 5-minute video showcasing NEHA member success stories that address climate change impacts. Watch the video at [www.neha.org/node/60356](http://www.neha.org/node/60356) to hear their inspiring stories about strategies for community-level adaptation and mitigation, as well as strong coalitions and collaborations.

## SUPPORT THE NEHA ENDOWMENT FOUNDATION

The NEHA Endowment Foundation was established to enable NEHA to do more for the environmental health profession than its annual budget might allow. Special projects and programs supported by the foundation will be carried out for the sole purpose of advancing the profession and its practitioners.

Individuals who have contributed to the foundation are listed below by club category. These listings are based on what people have actually donated to the foundation—not what they have pledged. Names will be published under the appropriate category for one year; additional contributions will move individuals to a different category in the following year(s). For each of the categories, there are a number of ways NEHA recognizes and thanks contributors to the foundation. If you are interested in contributing to the Endowment Foundation, please call NEHA at 303.756.9090. You can also donate online at [www.neha.org/about-neha/donate](http://www.neha.org/about-neha/donate).

*Thank you.*

### DELEGATE CLUB (\$25–\$99)

*Name in the Journal for one year.*

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 Plano, TX

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 Seattle, WA

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### HONORARY MEMBERS CLUB

(\$100–\$499)

*Letter from the NEHA president and name in the Journal for one year.*

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### 21st CENTURY CLUB

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*Name submitted in drawing for a free one-year NEHA membership and name in the Journal for one year.*

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(\$1,000–\$2,499)

*Name submitted in drawing for a free two-year NEHA membership and name in the Journal for one year.*

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*Name submitted in drawing for a free AEC registration and name in the Journal for one year.*

### EXECUTIVE CLUB AND ABOVE

(\$5,000–\$100,000)

*Special invitation to the AEC President's Reception and name in the Journal for one year.*

**Vince Radke, MPH, RS, CP-FS, DLAAS, CPH**  
 Atlanta, GA