



Climate resilience plan

A message from Andrea

HealthPartners is 27,000 people strong, and we're passionate about our mission to improve health and well-being in our community. We know a clean and safe environment is an important foundation for good health, and that the effects of climate change threaten this foundation. Our facilities and communities already face concerns such as severe winter weather, extreme heat and poor air quality from wildfire smoke, and the science establishing the likelihood of further climate change merits our full attention and action.

As one of the largest health systems in our region, we have a responsibility and opportunity to address the harmful effects of climate change in our community. As one of the first health systems to sign the White House and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Health Sector Climate Pledge, we joined in a national commitment to lower greenhouse gas emissions and prepare our facilities for effects related to climate change.

We're proud to release our first climate resilience plan. This report shows the progress we're making to ensure continuity of care and protect community health and well-being as our climate changes. I'm grateful to our colleagues who are making this plan a reality, and to our many community partners who share our vision of a healthier, more sustainable future.



Andrea Walsh

ANDREA WALSH
President and CEO





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Introduction

Climate change is a health issue

Climate change is already impacting Minnesota¹ and Wisconsin². Extreme heat, changes in precipitation and vector-borne diseases are a few examples of influences that can negatively affect our health and well-being.

Extreme heat events are already taking place in Minnesota and Wisconsin, and are expected to become more common, more severe and longer lasting in the future. Health impacts of extreme heat include heat-related illnesses (like heat exhaustion and heat stroke) and exacerbation of existing conditions (like respiratory or cardiovascular disease).

Rainfall patterns are already changing, and scientists predict even more localized large storm events, which leave some areas flooded and other areas experiencing drought. Health impacts of flooding include physical injuries, mold exposure and waterborne disease. Health impacts of drought include negative effects on food supply, potential concentration of groundwater contaminants and wildfire danger.

As temperatures rise and rainfall patterns change, these trends could create more hospitable conditions for vectors like mosquitoes and ticks, and an increase in diseases spread by these vectors. West Nile virus and Lyme disease are two examples of vector-borne diseases that may become more common in the future.



¹ <https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/climate>

² <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/climate/index.htm>



Health systems can make a difference, and HealthPartners is committed to addressing climate change

Health care organizations are uniquely positioned to see the impacts of climate change, and HealthPartners has a long history of climate action. Our mission is to improve health and well-being in partnership with our members, patients and community – and the health of our environment has a big influence on the length and quality of our lives. We are addressing climate change in the following ways:

Advocating and educating

We're using our trusted voice to share information about the risks and impacts of a changing climate. Our organization participates in several networks and working groups that urge climate action at all levels of society.



The Health Care Climate Council is a leadership network of U.S. health systems committed to strengthening the health sector's response to

climate change. HealthPartners has been an active member of the Health Care Climate Council since 2016.

AMERICA IS ALL IN

America Is All In is the most expansive coalition of leaders in support of climate action ever assembled in the

United States. Over 5,000 member organizations across all 50 states are involved, including cities and states; tribal nations; businesses; schools; and faith, health and cultural organizations. HealthPartners is one of 48 health care providers that have joined the coalition.

Reducing our carbon footprint

Delivering health care requires significant energy and supplies and historically has created significant waste. Consequently, the health care sector contributes to the negative health impacts of climate change that we eventually treat. In the United States, the health care sector accounts for 8.5%³ of greenhouse gas emissions that fuel climate change.

As a signatory of the White House and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Health Sector Climate Pledge, we have committed to reducing our Scope 1 and Scope 2 (organizational) emissions by 50% by 2030, and by 100% by 2050, from a 2018 baseline. We have also committed to conducting an inventory of Scope 3 (supply chain) emissions by the end of 2024.

We're carefully stewarding our financial and human resources to reduce our contributions to climate change. We're dedicated to a wide range of initiatives that include substitution of more climate-friendly anesthetic gases wherever possible, purchase and operation of organizational vehicles that reduce fuel use and exhaust, and implementation of energy conservation and efficiency initiatives in our facilities in partnership with our utility providers.

Increasing resilience to climate impacts

As severe weather events impact our area, health care providers need to keep our hospitals and clinics fully operational so community members can get the medical care they need. Additionally, as an "anchor" organization in the communities we serve, we will work to educate others and advocate for strategies that improve people's ability to adapt and recover from disruption.

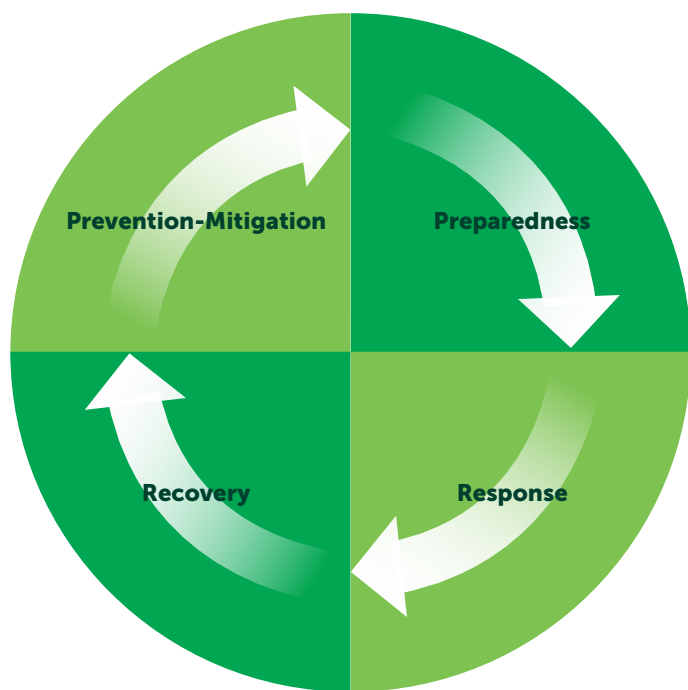
This climate resilience plan outlines the strategies, goals and actions we will take as an organization to address and prepare for climate change and extreme weather. The plan is divided into three strategies: emergency preparedness and response, infrastructure resilience, and community health resilience.

³ <https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/full/10.1377/hlthaff.2020.01247>



Resilience strategies

Emergency preparedness and response



We know that maintaining preparedness for emergencies is essential to our colleagues, patients, members and visitors. We conduct our emergency preparedness in four phases: prevention/mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery. Climate change is already making weather-related emergencies more severe, particularly those relating to high temperatures and heavy downpours, and this pattern is likely to continue in the future.

In the past year, our teams have updated department-level continuity of operations plans specifically related to weather-related events. These plans help to ensure that when the time comes, we can continue full operations and serve as anchors in our communities. Our teams also use an annual Hazard Vulnerability Assessment (HVA) process to assess the risk from weather-related events.

Our Sustainability and Emergency Preparedness teams will pursue the following actions to ensure our emergency preparedness actions align with the impacts of a changing climate:

- No later than 2025: Consider extreme weather projections in addition to historic data when developing our HVA
- Starting in 2024: Participate in and conduct colleague training to prepare for climate impact response
- Communicate extreme weather-related emergency preparedness information to colleagues regularly
- Collaborate with city and county emergency planning committees to incorporate climate resilience into community emergency preparedness work



Built, natural and public infrastructure resilience

Extreme weather events will place additional stress on our buildings, grounds and the public infrastructure that supports our operations. To help prepare, we've invested in infrastructure resilience.

For example, following record flooding in 2014 that nearly inundated the loading docks at Methodist Hospital, we worked with the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District to construct a flood wall and restore nearby wetlands. The wall protected the hospital's loading docks, while the wetlands increased floodplain storage at the site.



An Arbor Day Foundation Program

Additionally, recognizing the many resilience benefits of trees, Amery Hospital & Clinic and Westfields Hospital & Clinic received the Tree Campus Healthcare

designation for four years in a row. The Tree Campus program focuses on tree investment, education and community engagement.

Our teams developed thorough continuity of operations plans that address roles and procedures in the event of disruption, including disruptions to any and all utility systems. Our supply chain services team also maintains a system-wide continuity of operations plan, collaborating with suppliers and distributors to ensure supplies are available in the event of disruption.

Our Sustainability, Facilities and Supply Chain Services teams will pursue the following actions to address resilience in infrastructure and operations:

- Incorporate resilient building design elements in new construction and major renovation projects
- Proactively identify and pursue opportunities to improve resilience for existing buildings and landscapes
- Reduce energy and resource consumption through conservation
- Collaborate with local government officials, suppliers and distributors to anticipate and address disruptions before they occur



Community health resilience

Climate change can have profound impacts on the health of our communities. Some groups are more likely to be affected by climate change than others. Populations that are especially vulnerable to climate impacts include low-income people, people of color, people with limited English proficiency, Indigenous people, children, pregnant and postpartum women, older adults, outdoor workers, people with disabilities and people with chronic medical conditions.

Every three years, we complete a community health needs assessment and identify community benefit activities that address a range of these needs, including the effects of climate change on populations most at risk. In our 2021 community health needs assessment, we identified climate change as an emerging, overarching factor that impacts all aspects of health and well-being in the communities we serve. Going forward, we will more thoroughly incorporate climate change into our community health needs assessments and community benefit implementation reports.

We also closely partner with community groups to address climate resilience. For instance, we sponsor and partner with many nonprofits that provide services for prosperity and equity. Energy assistance referral for surviving cold weather is often a part of their counseling. A few organizations we have recently partnered with include Keystone Community Services, CLUES and the Saint Paul Public Library.

We work with the American Red Cross to encourage blood donation, helping address blood shortages that are taking place in part due to disruptions resulting from severe weather. We are proud to be a sponsor of The St. Paul Blood Donation Center and Biomedical Operations Training Facility in St. Paul, and annually host approximately 30 blood drives, collecting over 1,900 units of lifesaving blood.



Recognizing that good housing leads to better health outcomes, we partner with nonprofits that address housing needs in our community. One such nonprofit, Avivo Village, addresses the needs of individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness who have traditionally struggled to enter the shelter system. Avivo Village is an indoor community with 100 individual “homes” and is designed to be a dignified and safe alternative to outdoor encampments, where individuals are directly exposed to extreme weather events. High-quality wraparound services help residents move into permanent housing.

We also work with Twin Cities Habitat for Humanity to help make homeownership a reality in our communities. Twin Cities Habitat for Humanity is a leader in providing affordable, energy-efficient housing. Since 2006, our colleagues have helped build nearly 30 homes!

We are proud to learn, share and inspire action through participation in climate- and health-focused collaborative groups at regional, state and national levels. For example, we are participating in a work group focused on revising and implementing Goal 5 of Minnesota’s Climate Action Framework. Goal 5 focuses both on healthy communities and climate-smart public health and health care systems.

Our Sustainability and Community Relations team and our community health needs assessment committee will pursue the following actions:

- Conduct climate vulnerability assessment mapping across HealthPartners service areas
- Conduct outreach to patients before, during and after extreme weather events
- Include climate change-related questions in our community health needs assessment
- Continue and expand partnerships and volunteer engagements with community groups that are addressing climate resilience in at-risk populations





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What's next

HealthPartners leaders and colleagues engaged in Sustainability, Emergency Preparedness, Facilities, Supply Chain Services and Community Relations teams developed our climate resilience plan. The plan is approved and overseen by our sustainability executive sponsors committee.

With support from numerous internal teams and with input from our community, our climate resilience plan will be re-evaluated and refined every three years, in conjunction with the publication of our community health needs assessments. This enables us to keep current community needs top-of-mind as the plan is refined.

Meanwhile, our sustainability website and annual report will provide updates on our progress as we all work together toward the goals and actions outlined in the climate resilience plan.





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Founded in 1957, HealthPartners is a non-profit, integrated health system serving more than 1.2 million patients and more than 1.8 million health plan members nationwide. The care system includes more than 1,800 physicians, eight hospitals, 55 primary care clinics, 23 dental clinics, 22 urgent care locations and numerous specialty practices in Minnesota and western Wisconsin. HealthPartners also provides medical education and conducts research through HealthPartners Institute. For more information, visit [healthpartners.com](https://www.healthpartners.com).
