

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.¹

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](#)", aims to increase awareness among APHA members and partners about the central role of public health to effect climate change policy and practice: mitigation and adaptation.
- In addition to sharing resources and hosting webinars on topics related to climate and health, the [theme of APHA's Annual Meeting](#) is climate change and health. Join us in November in person or online to learn about the most recent advances in research and practice on this critical issue.

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.²



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



Avoiding air travel avoids the equivalent, on average, of 0.6 tons of CO₂ for a round-trip medium-length flight and 1.6 tons of CO₂ for a round-trip transatlantic flight.³



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.⁴



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 percent⁵ and help [maintain the natural balance of local nutrients](#) like nitrogen and phosphorus. Organic farming increases the concentration of carbon contained in the soil⁶ and reduces exposure to pesticides⁷ among vulnerable populations such as children.



Shifting to a diet emphasizing fruits, vegetables, nuts and whole grains can lower the risk of cardiovascular disease⁸ and reduce your food-related carbon footprint by one-half.⁹ 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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