

# Health in All Policies: State and Local Interagency Collaboration Provides Better Health for All in Oregon

*Flooding in Tillamook County, Oregon, and the subsequent local response efforts provided the Oregon Department of Transportation and Oregon Health Authority with a rich roadmap for interagency collaboration between health and transportation that can improve the health of all Oregonians.*

In December 2015, Tillamook County experienced record rainfall amounts that caused flooding and a subsequent state of emergency declaration.<sup>1</sup> Careful coordination between local transportation and health authorities in the county resulted in an efficient and effective response effort that proved to be a model for cooperation between state-level transportation and health agencies.<sup>2</sup> The Oregon Health Authority (OHA) and the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) also learned how they could better support their local partners in building more capacity for a climate-resilient Oregon.

## Steps Taken

- After the December 2015 storm recovery effort, ODOT and the OHA Public Health Division conducted interviews with local transportation and health leaders in Tillamook to better understand how their local counterparts worked together during the flood response. State staff were also interested in understanding what barriers, if any, local transportation and health officials experienced while collaborating in Tillamook County. These interviews were woven together into the inter-agency climate resiliency case study titled [How Tillamook Weathered the Storm](#).
- At the same time the Tillamook case study was taking shape, a workgroup made up of leaders from ODOT and OHA formed to regularly meet and discuss ways that public health considerations could be included in transportation policy decisions. The workgroup was made possible through a formalized partnership between the two agencies.

- ASTHO defines Health in All Policies as a collaborative approach that integrates and articulates health considerations into policy making and programming across sectors, and at all levels, to improve the health of all communities and people.
- The Tillamook flooding event [case study](#) helped to inform the development of an inter-agency climate workgroup meant to foster information sharing and collaboration in climate efforts across state agencies.
- Health in All Policies concepts were also prominently featured in [Oregon's Climate and Health Resilience Plan](#).

## Results

- The Tillamook Case Study was presented at the 2016 Oregon Emergency Management Conference to both emergency managers and public health preparedness professionals. It was also presented to leaders of the ODOT-OHA working group. The case study and the dialogue that followed facilitated increased attention on local and state cross-sector collaborations. For example, the case study brought to light the need for the state to provide better guidance to local communities in emergency situations. One specific example was around improving communication efforts for boil water notices that become necessary during weekend hours.<sup>3</sup>

- A new inter-agency climate group met for the first time in mid-2017 to discuss what work state agencies were doing on the topics of climate adaptation and resilience and also to align work and priorities wherever possible. The group agreed that a standing quarterly meeting would be beneficial and OHA has remained the lead convener, helping to ensure that health and equity are central to the collaboration. OHA also released a [Climate and Health Resilience Plan](#) and was able to incorporate inter-agency collaboration on climate adaptation as a priority strategy to implement in the coming years.
- This state-level interagency collaboration on climate adaptation and increased collaboration with local officials will lead to better health for all Oregonians.

### Lessons Learned

- Emergency response efforts require responders to take on multiple roles and responsibilities, often taking them out of their area of expertise. The strong partnerships and communications channels that Tillamook's local agencies had in place allowed for a quick, smooth response to the flooding. For example, in clearing downed trees from roads during the storm to allow for emergency responders to work, multiple agencies may have been required to work together and clear the trees based on who was closest to the roads in question.<sup>4</sup> This was communicated and coordinated through Tillamook's Incident Command Team.<sup>5</sup> OHA plans to work with other local Oregon communities to ensure their response is as coordinated and effective as Tillamook's.
- Social cohesion and social infrastructure are powerful components of resilience. OHA plans to explore the idea of improving social infrastructure (relationships, volunteerism, networks, etc.) among decision-makers and community members to facilitate better levels of preparedness and response to emergencies. For example, a coastal Oregon community north of Tillamook came up with a creative way of approaching community preparedness for tsunami and earthquake events. In addition to using traditional communication efforts to spread the word about an evacuation route, the community held a "fun run" event on the evacuation route for the community to participate in.
- State agencies are critical to strengthening local community resilience to extreme weather events and other emergency situations. By highlighting the effective inter-agency collaboration in Tillamook County during the December 2015 flooding, both state and local officials can learn how to take a Health in All Policies approach to emergency preparedness and management to facilitate better health for all Oregonians.

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For more information:

Emily York, MPH

Climate and Health Program Lead

Oregon Health Authority

Emily.a.york@state.or.us

For more information, please visit: [www.healthoregon.org/climate](http://www.healthoregon.org/climate)

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<sup>1</sup> Oregon Health Authority and Oregon Department of Transportation. “How Tillamook Weathered the Storm: A Case Study on Creating Climate Resilience on Oregon’s North Coast.” Available at <http://www.oregon.gov/oha/PH/HEALTHYENVIRONMENTS/CLIMATECHANGE/Documents/Tillamook-Case-Study-DRAFT-12-13-16b.pdf>. Accessed 9-24-17.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid*

<sup>3</sup> *ibid*

<sup>4</sup> *ibid*

<sup>5</sup> *ibid*