

Climate Change Information Resources

New York Metropolitan Region

(CCIR-NYC)



What can individuals do to prepare for climate change?

Key Points

Whether we know it or not, we constantly make decisions that both contribute to climate change and that will be influenced by climate change. Successfully adapting to future climate change will require an understanding of its causes and likely impacts and, through this, of the ways to protect one's self and one's family through specific actions. As individuals, we can have an impact on policymakers' decisions that relate to climate change by becoming informed and engaged in the issue.

The Role of the Individual

As residents of the New York metropolitan area, we all make decisions that contribute to future climate change. We depend on large-scale public energy and transportation systems that contribute to climate change through their greenhouse gas emissions. We may contribute to climate change through personal decisions about where to live and how to get to work, through our choice of appliances and patterns of water use. But we also must understand how we are likely to be affected by climate change, how an increase in the frequency of storms, a rising propensity for floods, and a metropolitan transportation system that is dangerously close to the coastline could affect our lives in the future.

Gathering Information

The first step in taking action is to be informed. Just as public agencies cannot devise new policies without an understanding of the phenomena they want to change, so too we cannot make decisions without knowing what conditions are expected and what choices we have. Many websites produced by state governments and others provide information about the causes, impacts, and responses to climate change.

Become Engaged in Your Community

Being informed can lead to taking action. Residents of the tri-state area have specific concerns about climate impacts, some of which are common to many urban areas and some of which are unique to the New York metropolitan area. There may be increases in the cost of electricity or homeowners' insurance rates. Many homes and businesses are located in areas that will be prone to floods in the future. How will increased summer heat affect poor and elderly urban populations? There is often little that individuals can do in response to these projected impacts, but they can demand that urban policy makers take a long term view and recognize the need to plan ahead so that cities, counties, and states are prepared to meet the challenges posed by climate change.

Individuals can inform others about climate impacts through conversations, letter writing, attending Community Board meetings, and voting. What each of us does as an individual becomes amplified when we engage others in the discussion and persuade them that there is a need for a careful, reasoned response to the impacts of current and future climate change and variability. We can use our own understanding of the issue to promote appropriate policies in government, public utilities, and the private sector, all of which have an important role to play in how well the tri-state area responds to climate change.

References

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Cynthia Rosenzweig, Goddard Institute for Space Studies (<http://www.giss.nasa.gov/>)

William Solecki, Hunter College, City University of New York (<http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/>)

