

Government Report Says Global Warming May Cause Cancer, Mental Illness By Matt Cover, Staff Writer



Planet Earth.

(CNSNews.com) – A new government report says global warming could lead to an increase in both cancer and mental illness worldwide, and it calls for more federally funded research to determine how that might happen.

The report, ***A Human Health Perspective on Climate Change***, was published by the Interagency Working Group on Climate Change and Health – a combination of scientists from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, NIH, State Department, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Department of Agriculture, the EPA, and the Department of Health and Human Services.

The report's overall thrust is for more federally funded research to investigate the alleged links between global warming and public health, including the potentially negative effects from warming and the potentially negative side-effect of green technologies.

While the report touches on, for example, the health effects of unclean water and respiratory ailments, it also deals with two other types of health issues not normally associated with global warming: cancer and mental illness.

Cancer

While the report does not claim that global warming will cause new types of cancer, it says that “higher ambient temperatures” caused by global warming will have an effect on cancer rates, probably pushing them higher. “There are potential impacts on cancer both directly from climate change and indirectly from climate change mitigation strategies,” the **report** said.

This increased risk supposedly comes from increased exposure to toxic chemicals, caused by global warming. The report also said that global warming would cause heavy rainfall, which would wash these toxic chemicals into the water. Hotter temperatures may also make these toxic chemicals even more toxic.

“One possible direct impact of climate change on cancer may be through increases in exposure to toxic chemicals that are known or suspected to cause cancer following heavy rainfall and by increased volatilization of chemicals under conditions of increased temperature,” states the report.

Another way that global warming will cause more cancer, the report said, was from increased exposure to ultraviolet (UV) radiation, which is known to cause some types of skin cancer. While UV exposure happens every time you go out into the sun, the report said that global warming will make it worse, leading to potentially more skin cancer.

“Another direct effect of climate change, depletion of stratospheric ozone, will result in increased ultraviolet (UV) radiation exposure. UV radiation exposure increases the risk of skin cancers and cataracts,” the report stated.

The report also highlighted a surprising way that global warming may cause more cancer: the development of green technologies. Green technologies often involve exotic metals and alloys that, according to the report, may cause cancer.

“Increased use of NiMH [nickel-metal-hydride] batteries [used in hybrid and electric cars] will necessarily require significant increases in nickel production and the impacts associated with nickel mining and refining,” states the report. “High-level nickel exposure is associated with increased

cancer risk, respiratory disease, and birth defects; the same is true with certain other metals, especially cadmium and lead [used in solar cells and batteries].

“Increased production of solar cells also can lead to increased environmental risks,” reads the report. “For example, cadmium-tellurium (CdTe) compounds in photovoltaic systems and the potential for increased cadmium emissions from mining, refining, and the manufacture, utilization, and disposal of photovoltaic modules. Cadmium and cadmium compounds like CdTe are classified as known human carcinogens.”

Despite these warnings and predictions, the report admitted that the government knows little about whether or not any of these supposed new causes of cancer will actually cause any more cancer.



A globe is projected as people are seen in Town Hall Square on the opening day of the Climate Conference in Copenhagen, Denmark, Monday Dec. 7, 2009. The largest and most important U.N. climate change conference in history opened Monday, with organizers warning diplomats from 192 nations that this could be the best, last chance for a deal to protect the world from calamitous global warming. (AP Photo/Peter Dejong)

“Very little is known about how such transfers will affect people’s exposure to these chemicals -- some of which are known carcinogens -- and its ultimate impact on incidence of cancer,” the report states. “The largest research gaps are in the materials and methods used for mitigation and adaptation, and their potential to increase or decrease cancer risks.”

Mental

Health

Another effect of global warming, the report said, was increased mental illness caused by natural disasters. These disasters, which already occur but will be more catastrophic as the world warms,

cause stress and anxiety, which can lead to mental illness. “A variety of psychological impacts can be associated with extreme weather and other climate related events,” reads the interagency report.

The people most likely to be affected by global warming-caused mental illness are those already susceptible to mental illness, especially stress-induced mental illness.

The report states: “Extreme weather events such as hurricanes, wildfires, and flooding, can create increased anxiety and emotional stress about the future, as well as create added stress to vulnerable communities already experiencing social, economic, and environmental disruption. Individuals already vulnerable to mental health disease and stress-related disorders are likely to be at increased risk of exacerbated effects following extreme weather or other climate change events.”

The possible mental health conditions that could be caused by global warming range from irritability to Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, sexual dysfunction, and drug abuse.

“The most common mental health conditions associated with extreme events range from acute traumatic stress to more chronic stress-related conditions such as post-traumatic stress disorder, complicated grief, depression, anxiety disorders, somatic complaints, poor concentration, sleep difficulties, sexual dysfunction, social avoidance, irritability, and drug or alcohol abuse,” reads the report.

As with global warming-caused cancer, the report admits that much more scientific work is needed on the links between global warming and mental illness, saying “numerous research gaps exist.”

“More work is necessary to understand the effects of climate change and extreme weather events on mental health status, to determine how to mitigate these effects, and to overcome the barriers to utilization and delivery of mental health services following extreme weather events,” says the interagency report.

Despite the admissions that more research was needed, the report concluded that there was “abundant evidence” of man-caused global warming, saying that “climate change will have” direct impacts on public health.

“There is abundant evidence that human activities are altering the earth’s climate and that climate change will have significant health impacts both domestically and globally.”

The report then called for an “overarching” international research effort to determine how all of the “abundant evidence” of global warming would lead to poorer public health.

“To be successful, an overarching research program needs to be integrated, focused, interdisciplinary, supported, and sustainable, yet flexible enough to adjust to new information and broad enough to cover the very diverse components described in this document,” states the report. “The effort must also be multinational, multiagency, and multidisciplinary, bringing together the strengths of all partners.”

The other public health effects of global warming cited in the report include: asthma and other respiratory diseases, cardiovascular disease, heat-related deaths, human developmental effects, neurological diseases, waterborne diseases, weather-related deaths, and infectious and animal-borne diseases. End