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San Francisco Releases New Framework to Address Human Health and Local Climate Impacts

San Francisco Department of Public Health unveils Climate and Health Adaptation Framework detailing menu of solutions for community consideration

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SAN FRANCISCO (March 9, 2017) -- The San Francisco Department of Public Health today released its Climate and Health Adaptation Framework describing the connection between climate change and local health impacts and outlining a set of potential solutions. The release of the framework is a first step toward opening the conversation with communities about how to prepare for the public health threat posed by these conditions.

As highlighted in the framework, global climate change has local impacts. For San Francisco, these include higher temperatures and more extreme heat days, sea level rise and more extreme storms, severe droughts and poorer air quality. To address health problems caused both directly and indirectly from climate change, the San Francisco Department of Public Health has crafted strategies for consideration. Each set of strategies offers opportunity to promote actions that yield health benefits and protect against climate change.

“We want our communities to know that many of the actions needed to slow climate change can improve our health, reduce chronic diseases and improve our health care system right here at home,” said Barbara Garcia, San Francisco Health Director.

In San Francisco, a range of negative health impacts will likely result from climate change and unusual weather patterns, having the largest effect on low income and vulnerable populations. The health risks caused by extreme heat, flooding and increased air pollution include increased risk of water-related illness and vector-borne disease and heat stroke.

The framework finds that neighborhoods with the worst air quality will likely see air quality decline and residents may have higher incidence of asthma, allergies and respiratory diseases. SOMA, Bayview/Hunter’s Point, Tenderloin, Financial District and Outer Mission already suffer disproportionately from poor air quality caused by heavily

trafficked freeways, the city's highest percentage of impervious surfaces (causing urban heat island effect and flooding), and lowest percentage of the city's tree cover.

"In our work with low-income communities most vulnerable to poor air quality, high flood risk, and extreme heat exposure, we have seen first-hand the systemic health problems arising in our communities," said Eddie Ahn, executive director of Brightline Defense, a nonprofit organization that has worked on environmental justice issues in San Francisco. "We're glad the City is empowering our communities to address these issues through the Framework."

The Strategies for Consideration - the potential actionable responses to each climate health risk - identify measures that have been recognized to combat climate change and provide health benefits. Suggested city-led strategies include the deployment of a sensor network to provide real-time monitoring of air quality to enhanced weather-related warnings for vulnerable populations. This Framework complements citywide efforts now underway to make San Francisco's infrastructure and residents more resilient in the face of climate risks.

"These challenges present opportunities to leverage the numerous institutions in San Francisco working towards a more resilient city. The Climate and Health Framework shows that solutions exist" said Brian Strong, San Francisco's Chief Resiliency Officer.

Following the release of the Climate and Health Adaptation Framework, the San Francisco Department of Public Health will conduct public outreach to understand existing community concerns about climate change and priority health issues. The community input will enable information-sharing along with engagement and promotion of ongoing activities. These actions will help to address climate change and create healthier lives for all San Franciscans.

Innovative work in cities has been increasingly recognized and essential to a national conversation. The American Public Health Association named 2017 as the Year of Climate Change and Health to mobilize action on climate change to protect health.

To download the Framework or for more information, please visit www.sfclimatehealth.org

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