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Dickinson-Iron District Health Department Addresses Climate Change in Observance of Earth Day April 22nd

Kingsford and Iron River, MI, April 21, 2014 - According to a new report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), climate change has already affected people throughout the world. In recent decades, changes in climate have caused impacts on natural and human systems on all continents and across the oceans. Our world has already experienced many of the negative effects of climate change such as damaged food crops, more extreme weather, melting glaciers, the spread of disease, and rising sea levels that threaten lowland communities. The report also warns that any future increase of temperature could lead to "abrupt and irreversible changes."

The report is the second in a series of three, the first of which was released in September 2013 and attributed conclusively that humans were the dominant cause of climate change. This second report, however, seeks to address the effects of climate change as a series of risks that will ultimately increase exponentially as temperatures warm.

The report found that the greatest risks of climate change are those faced by people living in low-lying regions, such as coastal areas and islands, and those who are particularly susceptible to storms, flooding, and sea-level rise. Unfortunately, it found that people living in urban areas are also at risk of inland flooding and extreme heat waves that could potentially lead to other disasters stemming from the destruction of power plants and water treatment centers. Food production is also at risk due to flooding, drought, and changing rainfall patterns.

Although it may seem obvious to some, the consequences of climate change will be felt disproportionately by the young and elderly, and especially by the poor. In fact, climate change itself is expected to increase wealth disparity worldwide and slow down economic growth all together. The report does say, however, that the consequences of climate change can be reduced with ambitious efforts by governments around the world to cut back greenhouse gas emissions. The researchers behind the report hope that by reframing the issue as a series of risks and potential consequences, governments will feel more pressure to act sooner, rather than later.

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