



Sustainability
Climate – Pledges Supported by Virginia Mason



Washington Preamble: There is a clear and present need for action on climate change to protect our region's natural assets, its vibrant communities and its growing economy. We business leaders of the Pacific Northwest endorse the Climate Declaration because we support using energy efficiently, investing in cleaner fuels, advancing renewable energy, and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Starting today, right here, the Pacific Northwest can lead the way. We can create a healthy climate and a strong, more resilient economy, by fostering innovation, advancing public health, spurring economic development through job creation and speeding technological advancement throughout our region.

Washington Businesses Support the BICEP Climate Declaration

What made America great was taking a stand. Doing the things that are hard. And seizing opportunities. The very foundation of our country is based on fighting for our freedoms and ensuring the health and prosperity of our state, our community, and our families. Today those things are threatened by a changing climate that most scientists agree is being caused by air pollution. We cannot risk our kids' futures on the false hope that the vast majority of scientists are wrong. But just as America rose to the great challenges of the past and came out stronger than ever, we have to confront this challenge, and we have to win. And in doing this right, by saving money when we use less electricity, by saving money to drive a more efficient car, by choosing clean energy, by inventing new technologies that other countries buy, and creating jobs here at home, we will maintain our way of life and remain a true superpower in a competitive world. In order to make this happen, however, there must be a coordinated effort to combat climate change — with America taking the lead here at home. Leading is what we've always done. And by working together, regardless of politics, we'll do it again.





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A Declaration from the [Health Care Climate Council](#)

Climate change is one of the greatest threats to human health today. The widespread and serious impacts of climate change are apparent: temperature-related illness and death, injuries and illnesses due to extreme weather events, the spread of infectious disease vectors, increases in water borne illnesses, and wide-ranging impacts from air pollution. Although no one can escape climate change, our most vulnerable people – children, the elderly, the poor, and people with underlying health conditions – are facing the greatest risks.

Should climate change remain unchecked, it will continue to exacerbate the global burden of disease and health inequities, increase health care costs, and overwhelm public health infrastructure worldwide. However, the health care sector's economic, political, and moral influence offers significant opportunities to lead societies in adapting to the effects of climate change and the risk it poses to human health.

As the frontline stewards of individual and community health, hospitals are in a unique position to address climate change. In addition to making impactful and measurable progress in their own operations to address climate change, hospitals must work towards accelerating investment in renewable energy and energy efficiency; scaling the adoption of climate change mitigation and resiliency programs; and advocating for local, state, and national policies that ensure a sustainable and healthy future.

As members of the [Health Care Climate Council](#), we recognize the immediate and long-term health benefits of climate change mitigation and we are committed to reducing global greenhouse gas emissions in order to protect and promote public health.



Sustainability
Climate – Pledges Supported by Virginia Mason

We call on all hospitals – in the United States and throughout the world – to join us in taking significant and measurable actions that the mitigation of climate change demands. We have an opportunity and an obligation to protect the communities we serve from the health impacts of climate change. In doing so, we can work together to restore the delicate balance between human and environmental health and offer hope for a healthy planet.



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Meeting the Climate Challenge

A Leadership Pledge by Hospitals, Health Centers and Health Systems from Across the Globe

Please read the text below. If you would like to sign the Pledge, you can use the link at the bottom.

Climate change, as *The Lancet Commission* put it in 2009, is “the biggest public health threat of the 21st Century.”[1] Since then, the climate crisis has only deepened, and the science has become increasingly irrefutable, heightening the urgency for action.

We know that climate change is already exacerbating a wide range of health problems the world over. As the earth warms, infectious diseases like malaria and dengue are spreading to new locations, threatening to reverse hard won health gains in many parts of the planet. Heat waves are growing in intensity and number, killing tens of thousands outright and aggravating asthma, heart disease and heat stroke. Increasingly severe storms, droughts and floods, harm human health and put oft-overstretched and ill-prepared health systems at risk.[2]

If greenhouse gas emissions remain unchecked, climate change will, within a matter of decades have severe pervasive and irreversible effects, undermining the food and water supply in many parts of the world, setting off mass migrations, and thereby triggering potentially unmanageable public health crises. [3] While everyone will experience the scourge of climate change, the most vulnerable populations—the urban and rural poor, those who are least responsible for the problem—will suffer the greatest impacts.



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Fossil fuel combustion—particularly burning coal—is the single greatest contributor to greenhouse gas emissions.[4] Fossil fuels are also the source of significant local health problems. For instance, fossil fuels make a major contribution to air pollution, which, according to the World Health Organization, killed seven million people in 2012, causing twice as many deaths than AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis combined.[5]

In order to protect local and global health from climate change and its sources, the world needs to move toward an economy based on clean, renewable, healthy energy. Indeed, a transition to a clean energy economy will benefit both the climate and public health.

As health care providers—hospitals, health systems and government health institutions—we recognize that we can play a leadership role in this transition.

We pledge to do our part to meet the challenge posed by climate change—a test perhaps as great as human civilization has ever known—by taking the following steps:

1. **Reducing Our Own Climate Footprint:** Our collective vision is to reduce our health care systems' emissions, moving toward low carbon, and ultimately, carbon neutral health care. Many hospitals in most parts of the world are major energy consumers and can make large reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. Other hospitals and health systems are energy-starved, and can deploy renewable energy to foster better health outcomes. We pledge to lead the way toward low-carbon health care by setting greenhouse gas reduction and renewable energy targets for the year 2020 and increasing our ambition thereafter. We will work to implement energy efficiency measures and, when feasible, deploy clean renewable energy to power our buildings. We will measure and report on our progress, including financial savings related to these actions. We will also seek to identify our institutions' other climate impacts, including transportation systems, purchasing policies, waste generation and disposal. We will begin to develop and implement plans to reduce these impacts as well.
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2. **Preparing for Climate Impacts:** In order to serve our communities, hospitals and health centers need to remain operational during and after an extreme weather event. We need to understand, anticipate and be equipped to manage the health needs of our immediate community and prepare for shifting disease patterns. We pledge to prepare for the impacts of climate change by becoming more resilient to increasing incidents of extreme weather. We will work to implement a series of measures to assure that our physical infrastructure, staff, and communities are prepared for the immediate impact of extreme weather events, and the longer term impacts of changing patterns of disease, as well as other climate impacts, combining these efforts with low-carbon solutions whenever possible.

3. **Leading the Way to a Low-Carbon Future:** As health care providers respected by local communities, government and business, we commit to provide leadership in our societies for a healthy climate. We pledge to do so by educating health care professionals and hospital staff, as well as the communities in which we are located, on the challenges and solutions related to climate and health. We also pledge to encourage public policy, economic development and investment strategies that move our societies away from fossil fuel dependency and foster instead a healthy energy future, thereby protecting local and global health from climate change.

By moving toward low carbon health systems, health care can mitigate its own climate impact, save money and lead by example. By becoming more resilient, health care can help prepare for the growing impacts of climate change. And by providing societal leadership we can help forge a vision of a future with healthy hospitals and healthy people living on a healthy planet.

At this crucial juncture, the time to act to protect public health from climate change is now.

- [Click here to sign the Pledge](#) (If your institution is not a GGHH member, by signing the 2020 Pledge, your hospital, health, professional, academic organization, health care facility or health system will receive an automatic membership in GGHH).