






TECHNICAL BULLETIN

Climate action plan of the state de Sao Paulo

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In July 2021, the Sao Paulo state government, through Decree No. 65.881, formalized its adherence to the Race to Zero (UN, 2022) and Race to Resilience (UN, 2020) campaigns, under the terms foreseen in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UN, 1992).

A first reflection of this adherence was the proposal prepared by the Sao Paulo government for a Climate Action Plan of the State of Sao Paulo – NET Zero 2050 – PAC NET Zero 2050 (SÃO PAULO, 2021), presented in last year's November at the United Nations Conference on Climate Change – COP 26 (UN, 2021).

The Plan contains strategies to face the climate crisis, and its goal is to neutralize, until 2050, in the Sao Paulo state territory, the greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) regulated in 1997 by the Kyoto Protocol.

Decree No. 65.881/2021 also foresees the elaboration of a Climate Adaptation Plan that will consider the analysis of risks and vulnerabilities related to potential climate phenomena associated to global warming.

These efforts follow up and enhance the State Policy on Climate Change implemented in Sao Paulo since 2009 (Law No. 13.798/2009 and Decree No. 55.947/2010), under the coordination of the Infrastructure and Environment State Department (SIMA/SP), to strengthen strategies aimed at adapting to events resulting from climate change and mitigating greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in the state's territory.

The climate crisis, resulting from the environmental impacts caused by human activities, portends worrying scenarios in terms of health risks for the populations settled in different regions on the planet. Heat waves, deteriorating air quality, reduced drinking water supply, floods, windstorms, hurricanes, and many other environmental and health problems can be linked to changing weather patterns.

The Brazilian Unified Health System (SUS), as well as other actors in the Health sector in Brazil, have interest and responsibilities regarding the subject, both in aspects related to mitigation and adaptation to the most critical phenomena.

The Healthcare sector has its share of responsibility in the construction of the new low carbon economy needed to mitigate climate change, because it involves a wide range of care institutions – hospitals, clinics, laboratories, etc. These institutions have significant consumption of the most varied supplies, such as products, materials, technologies, and facilities, as well as transportation, water, and energy, which lead to the emission of greenhouse gases not only in the healthcare units but also throughout their extensive supply chain.

As for the adaptation efforts, it is presumed that there will be an increase in the demand for assistance due to diseases and illnesses linked to the new and uncertain climate patterns. It is also presumed the conformity and the need to adopt preventive health measures in the face of different environmental scenarios of health risks that are intensified by climate change, especially for the most vulnerable populations in relation to confronting these events.

In the state of São Paulo, the State Health Department (SES-SP) has been following the matter and adopting exploratory initiatives to approach the topic, among them:

1. incorporation of questions related to climate change in the State Health Plan (PES 2016/2019), with actions focused on raising the awareness of managers and the staff of SES-SP on the topic;
2. improvement in relation to the issue of climate change in the PES 2020/2023 (SÃO PAULO, 2019), proposing initiatives focused on the mitigation of climate events, foreseeing goals for measuring and reducing energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions in the 150 care and support units (hospitals and other health services) associated with the SES-SP, with possible inductors reflections throughout the São Paulo Health sector;
3. planning for the implementation of the Sustainable Purchasing Project in order to improve the acquisition of products that are more environmentally sustainable and less harmful to patients' health;
4. creation of a Work Group involving eight SES-SP coordinators (Resolution SS-35/2021) to articulate and develop the State Policy on Climate Change and Ecological-Economic Zoning (ZEE) (SÃO PAULO, 2022) in the scope of the Health Portfolio;
5. held, in July 2021, the Workshop on Greenhouse Gas Emissions Management and Energy in the SES-SP units, coordinated by the Health Surveillance Center in partnership with the Healthy Hospitals Project (PHS), representative in Brazil of the international association Health Care Without Harm, with the participation of about 250 professionals, representing almost 100 hospitals and other non-hospital health units from several regions belonging to the SES-SP network;
6. encouraging the debate and the enhancement of Health policies in climate change contexts, with the 14th Healthy Hospitals Seminar, held in October 2021, in partnership with the PHS organization and other partners, whose theme was "Race to zero: the health arguments to face climate change"; in the seminar, the participation of the Health sector in the low carbon economy was debated, offering examples of emission reduction, efficiency and sustainability and promoting awareness about the urgency of the theme;

7 promoting reflection and improvement of public policies for health surveillance related to actions to mitigate the causes of climate change, especially low carbon policies, with the promotion of the 20th Chemical Safety/Contaminated Areas and Health Seminar of São Paulo, in November 2021, in partnership with the faculties of Public Health and Medicine of the University of São Paulo (USP) and other institutions, whose theme was “Two decades of public policies in Health and Environment: new scenarios of human exposure, from contaminated areas to the low carbon economy”;

8. reinforcement of surveillance actions related to adaptation to critical phenomena associated with climate change with regard to access to drinking water, with review and updating of the standards and guidelines relating, in particular, to water-carrying vehicles (Resolution SS-48/1999, as amended by Resolution SS-177/2021), exploitation of underground springs (Joint Resolution SMA/SERHS/SES 02/2006) and actions to control sanitary risks in contexts of water crisis (Communiqué CVS-23/2016);

9. promoting the debate and the search for articulated solutions to ensure safe drinking water consumption and production patterns in drought and dry scenarios with the promotion of the 11th São Paulo Water and Health Seminar, which took place in November/December 2021, in articulation with USP’s School of Public Health and other institutions, under the theme “Climate changes, water crises and water supply for human consumption: the view of consumers and producers, between vulnerabilities and resilience”;

10. enhancement of health risk control actions related to the adaptation to new climate phenomena, in the scope of the Environmental Health Surveillance of Risks Associated to Disasters (Vigidesastres) program, in accordance with the Brazilian Department of Health, especially regarding population groups directly impacted by floods and other critical climate phenomena, as well as occasional damage to health care structures and water production for human consumption;

11. adaptation of public health policies to new climate phenomena by improving surveillance actions related to air quality and potential risk scenarios, evaluating, among other strategies, electing and structuring Sentinel Health Units for events related to the changing patterns of air quality derived from fixed and moving sources of pollution and climate phenomena such as droughts, dry, and dust clouds;

12. encouragement of management skills associated with climate change and access to drinking water with the planning of the 12th Sao Paulo Water and Health Seminar, scheduled for December 2022, which will have the theme “Water, climate and health”.

The tragic climatic phenomena witnessed in recent years in Brazil and throughout the world suggest an increase in large-scale environmental crises and social instabilities – with implications for

human health and quality of life that have not yet been sufficiently verified – requiring the mobilization of the entire global community (IPCC, 2022). In this context, it is important that the Health sector should be aware of and aligned with the immense human efforts that will be needed from now on to minimize and adapt society to the new climate patterns.

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