



Consumer Version Excessive Heat Response Plan

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Section I – Overview

Exposure to excessive heat can cause illness, injury, and death. Heat-related illnesses could include heat stroke, heat exhaustion, heat cramps, sunburn, and heat rash. Symptoms include, but are not limited to experiencing headache, dizziness, nausea, muscle pain/cramps, fainting, excessive sweating, or painful, red, and warm or blistered skin. A vulnerable individual may experience heat-related illness or fatality at any time when temperatures are high, but the overall effect of prolonged periods of heat (a heat wave) increase the risk of illness and death in the population.

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention identifies Extreme Heat Events as one of the leading causes of weather-related deaths and estimates an average of 618 people in the United States are killed by extreme heat every year. Those at greatest risk for developing a heat-related injury are individuals who are working or playing outdoors, without access to air conditioning, socially isolated, or on certain medications. Vulnerable populations include children, low-income individuals, pregnant women, older adults, and individuals with mental or chronic conditions.



Increases in excessive heat events are due to the continuous warming of the Earth. Rising temperatures and changing climates increase the need to establish response plans for heat emergencies. In efforts to limit the adverse health effects from excessive heat, this document contains definitions and established guidelines for how the County of San Diego will respond to events of excessive heat.

Section II – Extreme Heat Events

A. General Roles and Responsibilities

If an excessive heat emergency occurs, the Public Health Services (PHS) branch, of the County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA), is responsible for coordinating response efforts between other County departments and external partners, and in offering necessary support services. Additional PHS responsibilities are to:

- Review information from National Weather Service (NWS)

- Determine local activation levels according to local weather conditions, changes in the climate, and the Excessive Heat Response Plan.
- Communicate & coordinate next steps with community partners.
- Finalize Cool Zone list by March 31st of each year.

B. Plan Activation

During extreme heat events, PHS will act and communicate with stakeholders to determine the appropriate activities. Three (3) phases of activation are recognized:

- Phase I. Seasonal Readiness
- Phase II. Heat Alert
- Phase III. Heat Emergency



Although different parts of the county have different temperatures, excessive heat often occurs between May 1 and September 30 each year, or later. Response to extreme heat conditions may take place at other times throughout the year, due to seasonal and excessive heat forecasts in any or all geographic areas of San Diego County. NWS forecasters use climate-region specific criteria to forecast if an excessive heat event will take place. This forecast provides time for the County to prepare for a heat response. The County Public Health Officer would determine the severity of an excessive heat event based on the threat to public health and safety. Designated staff members work with County and community partners to take action to response to the extreme heat conditions.

Section III – Communications

A. Notification and Warning

When notified of an approaching excessive heat event, the PHS department of County HHSA will begin the appropriate procedures; other County departments will be responsible for responding according to their roles and responsibilities. County actions are triggered by the NWS issuing heat alert products that indicate a period of hot weather that is likely to produce significant health risk to the population. The level of EHRP activation is influenced by the threat level forecast by the NWS.

B. Emergency Public Information

The County Communications Office will coordinate with responding agencies to provide the public with information on the current heat emergency, including information on **Cool Zones** and other services available to the public. Public information will also be shared on different County departmental websites, social media and news outlets, mobile applications, 2-1-1 San Diego, and others.



Section IV – Definitions & Resources

A. Definitions

Cool Zones: Designated air-conditioned sites throughout the county for vulnerable populations to gather at to keep cool and save energy costs.

Excessive Heat Warning: High impact heat event likely in the next 1 to 3 days and could impact all populations if precautions are not taken. Extreme temperatures are expected or imminent and will be much above average (exceptionally warm).

Excessive Heat Watch: There is the potential for a high impact event within the next 5 days. This event could be warning level and impact all population. Now is the time for advanced planning or actions to help reduce impact in the affected zones.

Extreme/Excessive Heat Event: A weather condition with extreme heat and/or humidity that could cause heat-related illnesses or fatalities.

EHRP Task Force: The Task Force is responsible for meeting annually to discuss past excessive heat events and review plans for the upcoming year's excessive heat response efforts.

Heat Advisory: Temperatures are expected within the next 1 to 3 days to be much above Normal, but not extreme or record breaking. The impacts from heat are likely to be on the sensitive groups that do not take precautions in affected zones.

Heat Alert: Phase II within Excessive Heat Response Plan, indicating a period of hotness that is risky, but not to the extent of causing injury/illness.

Heat Emergency: Phase III within the Excessive Heat Response Plan, indicating a period of hotness that is likely to cause heat illness/injury to individuals who are not prepared.

Heat Wave: A period of irregular and uncomfortably hot and humid weather. Heat waves can last two or more days.

National Weather Service: A federal agency that provides weather, water, and climate data. Gives warnings to hazardous weather conditions for purposes of preparedness, protection, and safety.

B. Resources

1. 2-1-1 San Diego:
 - <https://211sandiego.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/SanDiegoOneSheetFinal.pdf>
2. Cool Zones:
 - Cool Zones Interactive Map:
<https://cosdhhsa.maps.arcgis.com/apps/LocalPerspective/index.html?appid=146ce08c4eef429eab1560ff67c23122>
 - Cool Zones Location Listings:
<https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/dam/sdc/hhsa/programs/ais/documents/Cool%20Zone%20Locations%202019.pdf>
3. FEMA: Be Prepared for Extreme Heat
 - https://www.fema.gov/media-library-data/1529446743883-c0bc2f8fb4470ef58e85c5b65ebed44a/ExtremeHeat_infosheet_061518.pdf
4. National Weather Service (NWS):
 - <https://www.weather.gov/>
5. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration—NWS Experimental heat Risk: Identifying Potential Heat Risks in the Seven Day Forecast
 - <https://www.wrh.noaa.gov/wrh/heatrisk/?wfo=sgx>
6. Ready.Gov: Extreme Heat
 - <https://www.ready.gov/heat>
7. San Diego Gas & Electric (SDG&E):
 - <https://www.sdge.com/residential/pay-bill/get-payment-bill-assistance/health-senior-support/time-sensitive-program>
 - <https://www.sdge.com/residential/customer-service/contact-us>
 - Gas Emergencies: 1-800-411-7343
 - Electrical Emergencies: 1-800-611-7343

Section V – References

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention – Climate Change and Extreme Heat Events. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/climateandhealth/pubs/ClimateChangeandExtremeHeatEvents.pdf>
2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention – About Extreme Heat. Retrieved from https://www.cdc.gov/disasters/extremeheat/heat_guide.html
3. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention – Warning Signs and Symptoms of heat-Related Illness. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/disasters/extremeheat/warning.html>

Section VI – Heat Safety Tips

Stay **Cool**



Stay **Hydrated**



Stay **Informed**



Stay Cool

- **Wear** lightweight, light-colored, loose-fitting clothing.
- **Stay Cool Indoors.**
- **Check** out San Diego Cool Zone locations.
- **Limit** Outdoor Activities:
 - If exertion in the heat makes your heart pound and leaves you gasping for breath, **STOP** all activity.
 - **Wear** “broad spectrum” **Sunscreen** (SPF 15 or higher).
- **Do Not Leave Infants, Children, Elderly, or Pets in Cars**



Stay Hydrated

- **Drink** Plenty of Fluids (Don’t wait until you’re thirsty to drink).
- **Stay away from very sugary or alcoholic drinks.**
 - Also avoid very cold drinks, because they can cause stomach cramps.
- **Replace Salt and Minerals:** Heavy sweating removes salt and minerals from the body that need to be replaced. A sports drink can replace the salt and minerals you lose in sweat. If you are on a low-salt diet, have diabetes, high blood pressure, or other chronic conditions, talk with your doctor before drinking a sports beverage or taking salt tablets.
- **Keep Your Pets Hydrated:** Provide plenty of fresh water for your pets and leave the water in a shady area.



Stay Informed

- **Check** local news updates.
- **Know the Signs:** Learn the signs and [symptoms of heat-related illnesses](#) and how to treat them.
- **Monitor** Individuals at High Risk: Anyone can suffer from heat-related illness, but some people are at greater risk than others. These people include:
 - Infants and children, the elderly, and those with weight challenges.
 - Those who are ill with conditions such as heart disease, high blood pressure.
 - People who take certain medications, such as for depression, insomnia, or poor **circulation**.
- Watch out for your at-risk neighbors! Know the signs of heat exhaustion and heat stroke.

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On May 17, 2016, the County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency Department of Public Health Services received accreditation from the Public Health Accreditation Board.