

Minnesota Heat Emergency Response Template

How to use this template

This template offers guidance for public health practitioners and emergency managers to develop a rapid response plan for heat emergencies. The document is intended to be customized and adapted to meet the specific needs of your jurisdiction.

All black text is draft language. Text in **[brackets and highlighted grey]** is for you to fill in and customize with local information and preferences.

Planning tip: Blue boxes highlight planning tips. (Delete these blue tip boxes when your template is customized.)

The template doesn't include every part of a heat emergency response and doesn't list every strategy you could use. All content is optional and may or may not be relevant to your location.

To update the Table of Contents after customizing this resource for your jurisdiction, left-click anywhere on the Table of Contents and select "Update Table."

Before you finalize the document for your jurisdiction, delete this "How to use this template" page, along with the Minnesota Department of Health logo at the top of it.

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[YOUR LOGO]

[Your Jurisdiction] Heat Emergency Response Plan

Purpose

This document is designed to guide immediate responses during a heat emergency. It is intended to support operational decision-making and does not supersede local ordinances, labor agreements, or legal authority.

Last Updated

[Insert date of most recent update]

Assumptions

- Everyone is susceptible to heat-related illnesses; however, certain characteristics can increase a person's risk.
- The number of days with sustained temperatures above 90°F in Minnesota are expected to become more frequent.
- Energy demand for cooling will rise, stressing the power grid.
- Low nighttime temperatures cannot be relied on for consistent cooling, and higher nighttime temperatures could increase risk of heat-related illnesses for those who do not have or use air conditioning.
- Local public health staff and emergency management professionals will coordinate with community partners and possibly state agencies.
- Extreme heat can strain electrical grids, impact water supplies, and damage roads, posing hazards to the health and safety of communities.
- Extreme heat may require activating additional emergency response plans.
- Some pre-planning is necessary to ensure an effective emergency response.
- [Add additional assumptions for jurisdiction]

Pre-Planning

Identify Key Contributors

Planning Tip: Below is a recommended list of key contributors essential to implementing the emergency heat response plan. Jurisdictions should modify this list based on their size and capacity.

Role: Heat Emergency Response Lead

(Duties may include: Authorizes activation and deactivation; coordinates heat response; communicates with elected officials)

1st contact: [name, organization, preferred phone, email]

2nd contact: [name, organization, preferred phone, email]

3rd contact: [name, organization, preferred phone, email]

Role: Emergency Management Contact

(Duties may include: Key coordinator between internal and external teams; tracks grid conditions; procures and provides supplies)

1st contact: [name, organization, preferred phone, email]

2nd contact: [name, organization, preferred phone, email]

3rd contact: [name, organization, preferred phone, email]

Role: Public Health Contact

(Duties may include: Issues public health messaging; tracks health outcomes; coordinates with outreach teams)

1st contact: [name, organization, preferred phone, email]

2nd contact: [name, organization, preferred phone, email]

3rd contact: [name, organization, preferred phone, email]

Role: Law Enforcement/ Public Service Contact

(Duties may include: Ensures safety at cooling centers, distribution sites, and for outreach operations)

1st contact: [name, organization, preferred phone, email]

2nd contact: [name, organization, preferred phone, email]

3rd contact: [name, organization, preferred phone, email]

Role: MDH Public Health Preparedness Consultant

MDH Public Health Preparedness Consultant

<https://www.health.state.mn.us/about/org/epr/phpc/index.html>

(Duties may include: Supports public health role in the emergency response)

1st contact: [name, organization, preferred phone, email]

2nd contact: [name, organization, preferred phone, email]

3rd contact: [name, organization, preferred phone, email]

Role: National Weather Service Contact

<https://www.noaa.gov/jetstream/wfos>

(Duties may include: Provides heat forecast)

1st contact: [name, organization, preferred phone, email]

2nd contact: [name, organization, preferred phone, email]

3rd contact: [name, organization, preferred phone, email]

Planning Tip: Consider including contact information for community partners, such as:

- Tribal governments
- Tribal health departments
- Libraries
- Community centers
- Faith-based organizations
- Public schools
- Parks and recreation departments
- Utility providers
- Corrections departments/facilities
- Childcare providers
- Hospital administration
- Emergency medical services
- Short- and long-term care facilities
- Crisis response organizations
- Shelters and outreach organizations
- Social services (e.g., adult intake, child protective services, supportive housing)

Identify At-Risk Populations

Certain populations face higher health risks during extreme heat emergencies because of physiological, environmental, and socioeconomic factors that limit a person's ability to cool down or avoid dangerous conditions. A detailed list of heat-related vulnerabilities and heat-sensitive medications begin on page 14 of the [Minnesota Extreme Heat Toolkit \(PDF\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/climate/docs/mnextremeheattoolkit.pdf) (<https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/climate/docs/mnextremeheattoolkit.pdf>). The following list summarizes key factors known to directly increase an individual's risk of illness or death during a heat emergency:

- **Age:** Older than 65; younger than 5
- **Chronic health conditions:** Heart disease, diabetes, respiratory issues, mental health issues, certain medications
- **High exposure:** Outdoor workers, athletes, people without homes
- **Access and functional needs (limited adaptive capacity):** Low-income, pregnant, lack of transportation, insufficient home cooling, people whose preferred language is not English, socially isolated individuals, people reliant on a caregiver

[Insert jurisdiction's review of vulnerable populations from previous plans and add additional heat-related assumptions about these populations.]

Planning Tip: Update information by using the [Heat & Health Interactive Map](https://hmp-hub-umn.hub.arcgis.com/pages/heat) (<https://hmp-hub-umn.hub.arcgis.com/pages/heat>), developed by the University of Minnesota U-Spatial in collaboration with MDH, to locate groups in your jurisdiction who face a higher risk of heat-related illness. A **video tutorial on the Heat & Health Interactive Map** (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mnTBzJjBuxE>) shows you how to use the tool.

[Insert map of at-risk populations within the jurisdiction, which was created using the [Heat & Health Interactive Map](#) linked in the tip box above.]

[Insert additional commentary about at-risk populations and important places to implement strategies within the jurisdiction.]

Activation Indicators

Planning Tip: Reach out to your local [National Weather Service office](https://verification.nws.noaa.gov/services/public/NWSOffices.html) (<https://verification.nws.noaa.gov/services/public/NWSOffices.html>), local public health department, and your [MDH Public Health Preparedness Consultant](https://www.health.state.mn.us/about/org/epr/phpc/index.html) (<https://www.health.state.mn.us/about/org/epr/phpc/index.html>) to determine the best indicators that it's time to activate your plan.

Examples of existing plans and indicators for activation can be found in Appendix A.

Planning Tip: Indicators will vary across Minnesota because of unique conditions, vulnerable populations, available resources, and other factors that shape a local response. Consider the following when developing your activation indicators:

Meteorological Factors

- [Heat index \(https://www.weather.gov/ama/heatindex\)](https://www.weather.gov/ama/heatindex) has surpassed the level that triggers a heat alert for your region based on NWS criteria.
- [HeatRisk \(https://www.wpc.ncep.noaa.gov/heatrisk/\)](https://www.wpc.ncep.noaa.gov/heatrisk/) is projected to be moderate or higher.
- Note: The [Minnesota Extreme Heat Toolkit \(PDF\) \(https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/climate/docs/mnextremeheattoolkit.pdf\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/climate/docs/mnextremeheattoolkit.pdf) has information about the heat index and regional NWS heat alert criteria beginning on page 6.
- Consider nighttime low temperatures; if the temperature does not drop enough at night, at-risk populations are high priority for outreach.
- Early in the season (May and June) activation temperatures may be lower than later in the season (July through September) because the population has not yet acclimated to the heat.

Infrastructure and System Status

- Monitor roadways for buckling.
- Coordinate with local utilities to understand grid status and peak load advisories.
- Coordinate with the local water utility provider to understand status and advisories.

Community Events and Population Dynamics

- Plan for extra monitoring during planned outdoor summer events, school activities, and sports programming.
- If hosting large summer events, plan ahead to prevent heat-related illnesses. Monitor conditions and put your plan into action early if needed.
- Example: Grandma's Marathon in Duluth. Work with race officials to determine if services like extra Emergency Medical Services (EMS) support or additional hospital beds are needed to handle the large number of race participants and spectators.

Concurrent Hazards

- Poor air quality from wildfire smoke combined with heat can make conditions more dangerous and increase respiratory distress and other health impacts. Wildfire smoke may make it unhealthy to open windows at night, preventing night-time cooling.

Local Capacity and Resources

- Coordinate with local public health staff and the Minnesota Department of Health for syndromic surveillance (see below).
- Assess hospital capacity and EMS call patterns and volume.
- Assess social media and public inquiries for heat-related information.

Planning tip: Syndromic surveillance systems provide near-real-time data from emergency departments (EDs) and hospitals to help public health scientists detect, understand, monitor, and respond to emerging public health events. The Minnesota Department of Health collaborates with hospitals that serve Minnesota residents to monitor de-identified patient data to detect and respond to emerging health trends. MDH has a pilot project exploring ED visits for heat-related illness to provide situational awareness and supplement the weather forecast as an indicator of public health risk.

The following are syndromic surveillance tools used in Minnesota to track heat-related health responses.

- The **National Emergency Medical Services Information System (NEMSIS) [Heat-Related EMS Activation Surveillance Dashboard](https://nemsis.org/heat-related-ems-activation-surveillance-dashboard)** (<https://nemsis.org/heat-related-ems-activation-surveillance-dashboard>) uses nationally submitted emergency medical services (EMS) data to track heat-related events before patients are in a hospital setting. This dashboard is updated weekly. More detailed information can be found in the NEMSIS Heat-Related EMS Activation Surveillance Dashboard [Companion Guide](https://wiki.utahdccc.org/confluence/spaces/NTD/pages/206274695/Heat-Related+EMS+Activation+Surveillance+Dashboard+EMS+HeatTracker+Companion+Guide) (<https://wiki.utahdccc.org/confluence/spaces/NTD/pages/206274695/Heat-Related+EMS+Activation+Surveillance+Dashboard+EMS+HeatTracker+Companion+Guide>)
- **CDC National Syndromic Surveillance Program (NSSP) Electronic Surveillance System for the Early Notification of Community-based Epidemics or [ESSENCE](https://www.cdc.gov/nssp/php/onboarding-toolkits/essence.html)** (<https://www.cdc.gov/nssp/php/onboarding-toolkits/essence.html>) is the tool used by MDH and other NSSP collaborators to access and analyze syndromic surveillance data and create dashboards and visualization for monitoring public health issues of interest, such as heat-related emergency department visits.
- Health care and local public health facilities interested in becoming involved in syndromic surveillance in Minnesota can find more information through [MDH Public Health Reporting and Interoperability Program](https://www.health.state.mn.us/data/interoperability/syndromic.html) (<https://www.health.state.mn.us/data/interoperability/syndromic.html>).
- If information about local capacity and resources is not readily available, identify a proxy or partner who can supply it during activation.

#1 person designated to lead activation: [name, department, 24/7 phone, email]

#2 person to assist with activation: [name, department, 24/7 phone, email]

#3 person to assist with activation: [name, department, 24/7 phone, email]

[Jurisdiction] will coordinate with the local National Weather Service (NWS) office, emergency management, the local public health department, and the regional [MDH Public Health Preparedness Consultant](https://www.health.state.mn.us/about/org/epr/phpc/index.html) (<https://www.health.state.mn.us/about/org/epr/phpc/index.html>) to establish customized indicators for activating this emergency heat response plan.

[Jurisdiction] will continually monitor for the following indicators for activation:

- [customized indicator]
- [customized indicator]
- [customized indicator]

Notification of Activation

[If appropriate for this jurisdiction, insert a file path or decision tree for the heat emergency response plan. If a pre-written document is not available, please describe how the notification process will take place.]

Implementation Strategies

Planning tip: In the Response Action Checklist below, list the actions your jurisdiction has chosen to implement during a heat emergency. Select a manageable number of actions your jurisdiction has the staff and resources to execute well. Completing the After-Action Summary (located in Appendix C) should be included as a final step on this checklist.

Use a separate row for each key action identified; insert more rows as needed. This list can be used as a checklist for the response.

Response Action Checklist

[] [Insert heat response actions appropriate for the jurisdiction. Example actions can be found in Appendix B.]

[Primary person responsible for above action, and contact information]

[] [Heat response action 2]

[Primary person responsible for action and contact information]

[] [Heat response action 3 (continue adding as many heat response actions as needed)]

[Primary person responsible for action and contact information]

[] Complete the short After-Action Summary, located in Appendix C.

[Primary person responsible for action and contact information]

Heat Emergency Response Actions

Planning tip: The template below is intended to be used to further define each Heat Emergency Response Action. Include details for successful implementation, primary and secondary responsible contacts, and strategies for reaching at-risk populations. See Appendix B for response action examples. Copy, paste, and edit actions appropriate for your jurisdiction.

[Insert heat emergency response action; see appendix B for examples]

Implementation strategy: [strategy]

Primary person responsible: [name, department, 24/7 phone, email]

Backup contact: [name, department, 24/7 phone, email]

Strategies for at-risk populations:

- [strategies]
- [strategies]
- [strategies]

Deactivation Indicators

#1 person designated to lead deactivation: [name, department, 24/7 phone, email]

#2 person to assist with deactivation: [name, department, 24/7 phone, email]

#3 person to assist with deactivation: [name, department, 24/7 phone, email]

Designate additional people to assist with each part of deactivation as needed.

Planning Tip: Just like choosing when to activate the plan, deciding when to end it will depend on many factors. Communication with decision-makers is key. The following are suggestions for deactivation indicators. Use these or others as appropriate for the jurisdiction.

- All National Weather Service alerts have expired.
- Heat index has dropped below [insert level].
- There is no longer an immediate threat to the public, as defined by [insert criteria].
- Heat Emergency Response Lead [insert lead's name and organization] authorizes deactivation.
- Coordinate with MDH to verify ESSENCE or other syndromic data show decreasing heat-related visits. [Syndromic Surveillance Reporting - MN Dept. of Health](https://www.health.state.mn.us/data/interoperability/syndromic.html) (<https://www.health.state.mn.us/data/interoperability/syndromic.html>)
- Utility confirms stabilized grid conditions.

[Jurisdiction] will continuously monitor the following indicators for deactivation:

- [indicator]
- [indicator]
- [indicator]

Notification of Deactivation

[If appropriate for the jurisdiction, insert a file path or decision tree for the heat emergency response deactivation plan. If a pre-written document is not available, describe how the notification process will take place. Consider notification scenarios for times *during* and *after* business hours.]

After-Action Review and Document Update

#1 person designated to after-action review: [name, department, preferred phone, email]

#2 person to assist with review: [name, department, preferred phone, email]

#3 person to assist with review: [name, department, preferred phone, email]

- Schedule an after-action review or “Hot Wash” meeting with key contributors and take notes for official documentation.
- Schedule a meeting with the core team to complete the short after-action review in Appendix C or use your own form.
- Compile the following documentation:
 - **Incident Log:** Document all actions taken, major decisions made, and communications issued during the heat emergency.
 - **Health Data:** Request a final summary of emergency department visits, emergency medical services (EMS) calls, and hospitalizations.
 - **Infrastructure Report:** Compile reports from public works and utility companies/departments detailing any infrastructure damage or operational strain.
- Draft an after-action review report that summarizes the findings and recommendations.
- Update this Heat Emergency Response Template based on recommendations.

Planning tips: The following are suggested topics for an after-action review.

- Event summary – Outline the timeline, severity, and key milestones.
- Response evaluation – Review actions taken, noting what worked well and what did not.
- Impact analysis – Assess health effects and infrastructure impacts.
- Gap identification – Identify shortcomings in the response and resource limitations.
- Corrective actions – Develop specific improvements with assigned responsibilities and deadlines.

Suggested evaluation data:

- Cooling center usage – Visitor counts and peak-use periods.
- Outreach activity – Number of outreach attempts and wellness checks completed.
- Resource distribution – Total water bottles or other supplies distributed.
- Health system impacts – Heat-related Emergency Department visits and EMS calls.
- Public engagement metrics – Public inquiries, web page traffic, and social media engagement.

Follow-up:

While this document outlines ways to respond during a heat emergency, the best protection comes from preparing ahead of time. Long-term cooling strategies, like planting trees, can lower summer temperatures and reduce the need for emergency responses in the future. Encourage decision-makers to explore and implement solutions that will help create a cooler, more resilient Minnesota for generations to come.

Appendix A: Heat Plan Activation Examples

Planning tip: Reviewing heat emergency activation triggers and indicators used by other jurisdictions can help local decision-makers develop their own triggers. The plans below provide examples of heat-emergency activation indicators used in other U.S. jurisdictions.

Chicago, Ill. – [Beat the Heat](#)

(https://www.chicago.gov/city/en/depts/oem/supp_info/MediaToolKits0/BeattheHeat.html)

The city’s heat emergency response plan is activated once a Heat Warning is issued by the local NWS office.

The following are triggers to issue a NWS Heat Warning in Chicago:

- Peak heat index is expected to reach 100° to 105°F for three consecutive days.
- Peak heat index is expected to exceed 105° to 110°F for at least two consecutive days.
- Peak heat index is forecasted at 110°F or higher for one day.

Washington, D.C. – [2025 District of Columbia Heat Plan \(PDF\)](#)

(https://mayor.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/mayormb/publication/attachments/2025_District_Heat_Plan.pdf)

D.C. activates its plan at a relatively low heat index because it is a dense urban environment with a high amount of tourism, and the city requires more time to adequately notify people and provide services during a heat emergency. The D.C. activation triggers are intentionally not aligned with the NWS alerts.

Trigger: Heat index reaches 95°F.

Action: The “2025 District of Columbia Heat Plan” is activated. Cooling centers open, public service announcements are launched, and outreach teams are deployed to monitor homeless populations.

Aroostook County, Maine – [2023 Extreme Temperature Plan \(PDF\)](#)

(<https://aroostookema.com/wp-content/uploads//2024/01/Aroostook-Extreme-Temperature-Plan-Signed-1.pdf>)

Rural Aroostook County, the northernmost county in Maine, covers a geographic area nearly as large as St. Louis County, Minnesota.

Unique feature: To meet the challenges of alerting people and providing services and resources across such a large area, the plan uses a multi-phase, waterfall approach. Phase one initiates seasonal readiness activities in spring to raise public awareness of the risks of extreme heat and to help local communities prepare to recognize and respond to extreme heat events. Phase two begins when an extreme temperature event is likely to occur within 48 to 96 hours, and involves increased monitoring, warning the public, and preparing resources. Phase three activates the emergency response to an extreme heat event. The plan also includes a fourth phase, recovery.

Phase two triggers: Temperatures approach 90°F or nighttime temperatures do not abate (county internal benchmark).

NWS has a hazardous weather outlook for excessive heat within the next three to five days.

NWS heat advisory – heat index of 95°F to 104°F for two or more consecutive hours.

NWS excessive heat watch – prolonged period of dangerous excessive heat possible within 48 hours.

Phase three trigger: NWS excessive heat warning – a heat index of 105°F or higher for two or more consecutive hours.

Note: In 2017, the public health departments of Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Rhode Island, and New York consulted with the NWS on heat health impacts in their region, leading to an official change in heat advisory criteria for northern New England. The threshold was lowered from heat index values of 95°F to 99°F for two or more consecutive days or 100°F to 104°F for any duration of time — to heat index values of 95°F to 104°F for two or more consecutive hours.

Appendix B: Response Action Examples

Communication

Update Website with Cooling Center Information

Implementation Strategy:

Ensure a list or map of open [libraries/community centers/churches/other sites appropriate for the jurisdiction] is up to date and available [via a website and/or social media channels or something else appropriate for your jurisdiction]. Ensure places on the list or map have working air conditioning.

Primary Responsible Person: [name, department, 24/7 contact number, email]

Backup Contact: [name, department, 24/7 contact number, email]

Strategies to Reach At-Risk Populations:

[] Don't rely on websites or social media messages to reach everyone in the community.

[] Consider using other communication methods such as radio, hotline, direct outreach to people who are homeless or other vulnerable populations, or a phone tree.

Mass Notifications

Implementation Strategy:

Web page updates are important but not sufficient during an emergency. Effective communication also requires using your local alert system (e.g., CodeRED or Everbridge). Messages should be clear, provide specific instructions, and be translated into locally appropriate languages.

Update the heat emergency communication examples below with messages appropriate for the jurisdiction.

Communicate Heat Protective Measures to the Public

Implementation Strategy:

Share straightforward information on staying safe in the heat, such as:

Stay Hydrated

- Drink more water or electrolyte solution, especially if you are active outdoors.
- Be proactive, don't wait until you are thirsty to hydrate. Avoid alcohol and caffeinated drinks.

Stay Informed

- Follow local weather and news reports.
- Check your heat risk on the National Weather Service's web page [NWS HeatRisk \(https://www.wpc.ncep.noaa.gov/heatrisk/\)](https://www.wpc.ncep.noaa.gov/heatrisk/).
- Download the [OSHA-NIOSH Heat Safety Tool app \(https://www.osha.gov/heat/heat-app\)](https://www.osha.gov/heat/heat-app) for mobile phones.
- [Know the Signs and Symptoms of Heat-Related Illnesses \(PDF\) \(https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/climate/docs/knowthesigns.pdf\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/climate/docs/knowthesigns.pdf).

Stay Cool

- Move to a shaded area, an air-conditioned space, or other cool place.
- Wear loose-fitting, lightweight, light-colored clothing and use sunscreen.
- Take a cool shower or bath.
- Don't use electric fans to cool yourself when temperatures indoors reach 95°F or above. Blowing hot air can be dangerous.
- Limit your time outdoors as much as possible and take frequent breaks in a shaded area if you must be outside.

Activate faith-based and community organization phone trees. Share a simple script, such as:

- "Do you have air conditioning at home?"
- "Do you have drinking water?"
- "How are you feeling?"
- "What will you do if the power goes out at your home?"

Primary Responsible Person: [name, department, 24/7 contact number, email]

Backup Contact: [name, department, 24/7 contact number, email]

Strategies to Reach At-Risk Populations:

[] Work with older adult protective services to make a list of high-risk clients who have used the system before but are not in a facility now. Assign city/county staff to conduct phone check-ins.

[] Use existing programs (such as Meals on Wheels) to connect with high-risk clients.

[] Ensure the phone tree script above includes questions about medical equipment such as: “If you use oxygen, do you have a backup plan for your concentrator if the power goes out?”

[] Suspend non-essential outdoor municipal work.

Communication with Healthcare Facilities (Surge Coordination)

Implementation Strategy:

During an activated heat emergency, initiate a daily call or written situational report exchange with key stakeholders to provide weather briefings and community health surveillance updates.

Identify key healthcare stakeholders.

- [name, organization, contact information]
- [name, organization, contact information]
- [name, organization, contact information]

Primary Responsible Person: [name, department, 24/7 contact number, email]

Backup Contact: [name, department, 24/7 contact number, email]

Strategies to Reach At-Risk Populations:

[] Request that healthcare facilities consider discharge planning practices that account for extreme heat risk, including access to adequate cooling at home.

[] Monitor HVAC status at nursing homes and assisted living facilities.

Grid Instability

Emergency Alert to Conserve Energy

Implementation Strategy:

All energy conservation messaging should be coordinated with the utility provider and local emergency management to ensure consistency and appropriateness.

Send out an emergency alert advising community members to immediately conserve energy where safely possible. However, do not issue this alert until requested by the utility provider; premature alerts may cause alert fatigue.

The alerts should be specific. Instead of “conserve energy,” communicate clear action steps. Coordinate with the energy provider to finalize messaging.

“Turn thermostats to [insert temp] between [insert times].”

Monitor Grid and Maintain a Priority Restoration List

Implementation Strategy:

Monitor for brownouts or grid instability. Share list of critical cooling assets with utility to ensure prioritization for power restoration if power is disrupted. Cooling assets include, but are not limited to:

- Hospitals and urgent care centers
- Designated cooling centers
- Senior living facilities
- Water treatment and pumping stations
- [Update the list to meet jurisdiction's needs.]

Primary Responsible Person: [name, department, 24/7 contact number, email]

Backup Contact: [name, department, 24/7 contact number, email]

Strategies to Reach At-Risk Populations:

[] Monitor outages in areas where a power loss would create heightened risk due to insufficient building design, such as mobile home communities or low-income neighborhoods.

[] Request U.S. Department of Health & Human Services (HSS) emPOWER Program data by talking with your [MDH Public Health Preparedness Consultant](https://www.health.state.mn.us/about/org/epr/phpc/index.html) (<https://www.health.state.mn.us/about/org/epr/phpc/index.html>). The HSS emPOWER Program provides data and tools to help protect at-risk Medicare beneficiaries during emergencies and disasters.

Note: Minnesota law requires utilities to reconnect or continue service to residences where medical equipment that requires electricity to sustain life is used. People at risk of experiencing a medical emergency due to power loss are advised to provide their utility with documentation of their medical needs.

Mass Cooling and Water Distribution

Activation of Emergency Cooling Centers

Implementation Strategy:

Move beyond passive cooling locations, such as libraries and community centers, into active emergency operations.

Planning tip: Appendix D offers suggestions for selecting cooling center locations.

Strategies for immediate implementation may include:

- Verify air conditioning systems are functional 24 hours before opening.

Implementation Strategy:

Dehydration accelerates heat-related illness. Implementation includes strategically placing water resources in areas with large concentrations of at-risk residents and at cooling centers.

Pre-stage pallets of bottled water for quick distribution.

Utilize the community's mobile assets (such as fire department vehicles, city SUVs, Parks & Rec trucks) to assist with rapid water distribution.

Track the number of water bottles distributed. Initial distribution targets may be adjusted daily based on observed demand, staffing, and supply availability.

Primary Responsible Person: [name, department, 24/7 contact number, email]

Backup Contact: [name, department, 24/7 contact number, email]

Strategies to Reach At-Risk Populations:

[] Deploy outreach teams (e.g., social workers and other staff) to deliver water to at-risk populations such as outdoor workers or places where people without housing spend time.

[illegible]

Establish Hydration Stations

Implementation Strategy:

Partner with local businesses (gas stations, grocery stores, senior centers, the YMCA, etc.) to serve as designated refill and water distribution stations.

Place temporary signage on the sidewalk: “Free Water Here.”

While not designated cooling centers, these sites could serve as mass water drop-off locations to increase public access to drinking water.

Primary Responsible Person: [name, department, 24/7 contact number, email]

Backup Contact: [name, department, 24/7 contact number, email]

Strategies to Reach At-Risk Populations:

- [] Choose locations with high visibility and use signs with simple, easy-to-read messages.

Wellness

Targeted Wellness Checks for Homebound Residents

Implementation Strategy:

This action relies on leveraging partner resources rather than creating new lists from scratch during an emergency. Successful implementation involves activating agreements with partner agencies to complete wellness checks. Jurisdictions may prioritize wellness checks based on available staffing and known high-risk clients.

Wellness checks will be initiated when [insert metric for initiation: i.e., at plan activation, on day two of a heat emergency, or after X heat index is reached].

Primary Responsible Person: [Name, department, 24/7 contact number, email]

Backup Contact: [name, department, 24/7 contact number, email]

Strategies to Reach At-Risk Populations:

☐ Before a heat emergency, establish an escalation protocol to follow if a client does not answer the outreach attempt.

☐ Before a heat emergency, establish an escalation protocol to follow if a client appears in distress during a wellness check.

- [] Use connections with existing organizations (e.g., Meals on Wheels) to provide outreach.

☐ Use phone trees organized by faith-based organizations and other well-connected community groups.

☐ Law enforcement and all first responders should carry bottled water in their vehicles, both for their own use and to offer during wellness checks.

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Implementation Strategy:

Examples of non-emergency labor may include road maintenance, mowing, or landscaping, as determined by department leadership.

Peak heat hours are typically from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., but they may shift depending on changing conditions.

[Describe plan for outdoor work suspension with or without pay, and options for outdoor workers to be reassigned to indoor support work, such as in a cooling center.]

Primary Responsible Person: [name, department, 24/7 contact number, email]

Strategies to Reach At-Risk Populations:

☐ Encourage private businesses to suspend outdoor work during the heat emergency.

☐ Encourage all residents to suspend outdoor work on their own personal projects during the heat emergency.

[illegible]

Implementation Strategy:

Planning tip: Instructions for using WBGT start on page 24 of the [Minnesota Extreme Heat Toolkit \(PDF\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/climate/docs/mnextremeheattoolkit.pdf) (<https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/climate/docs/mnextremeheattoolkit.pdf>).

Primary Responsible Person: [name, department, 24/7 contact number, email]

Strategies to Reach At-Risk Populations:

[] To protect outdoor workers and volunteers, ensure event organizers clearly communicate cancellation or safety delays to staff and volunteers setting up the event, not just the athletes and attendees.

Emergency Transportation to Cooling Resources

Implementation Strategy:

Access to cooling is ineffective if vulnerable residents cannot reach it. Strategies for successful implementation include:

- Suspending fares on municipal transit systems during the heat emergency.
- Activating on-demand door-to-door transportation services, such as dial-a-ride, volunteer driver networks, or faith-based coordination.

[Update list with jurisdiction's implementation plan. Be sure to consider each "Strategy for Reaching At-Risk Populations" when building the plan.]

Primary Responsible Person: [name, department, 24/7 contact number, email]

Backup Contact: [name, department, 24/7 contact number, email]

Strategies to Reach At-Risk Populations:

[] Activate on-demand transportation services and ensure dispatchers prioritize heat-relief requests.

[] Suspend fares on municipal transit systems during the heat emergency.

[] Use wheelchair accessible school buses or agency vans to run in specific loops between mobile home communities, senior high-rises, and designated cooling centers.

[] Use these buses or agency vans as distribution points for bottled water.

[] Promote a specific phone number that rural residents can call to request an emergency pickup if they are in distress and lack a vehicle.

Track Key Heat Impact Metrics

Implementation Strategy:

Identify key metrics the jurisdiction plans to track before, during, and after the heat emergency:

- [metrics]
- [metrics]
- [metrics]

Planning Tip: Metrics could include syndromic surveillance of ED visits; EMS call volume and type; power outages; daily visitors to cooling centers; infrastructure stability; and the number of water bottles distributed.

Primary Responsible Person: [name, department, 24/7 contact number, email]

Backup Contact: [name, department, 24/7 contact number, email]

Strategies to Reach At-Risk Populations:

[] If a power outage occurs in an area with high concentrations of an at-risk group, activate a phone tree to proactively reach people.

Appendix C: After-Action Review

Planning tip: Update the questions on this form based on the core actions taken during the jurisdiction's heat response.

Complete this after-action review within 48 hours of deactivating the heat emergency plan. Be honest and constructive.

Heat Emergency Dates: Start Date: [mm/dd/yyyy] Deactivation Date: [mm/dd/yyyy]

Peak Conditions: Max Temp: [enter temp] Max Heat Index: [enter heat index]

Triggers Met: [] [enter alert] NWS Alert [] Power Outage [] Other: [other]

Known Heat-Related Hospital Visits [visits] (coordinate with Public Health)

Known Heat-Related Deaths [deaths] (coordinate with Medical Examiner)

Website Clicks [clicks on website]

Social Media Engagement [social media]

Response Effectiveness

Communications

Were alerts sent with time for the public to act? [] Yes [] No

Did we receive comments on social media posts? [] Yes [] No

Notes: [Insert lessons learned and social media comments.]

Cooling Centers

Were cooling centers activated in time for the heat? [] Yes [] No

Was transportation available? [] Yes [] No

Notes: [Insert lessons learned and utilization numbers for each center.]

At-Risk Populations

Were wellness checks completed? [] Yes [] No

Were public events cancelled? [] Yes [] No

Notes: [Insert lessons learned and service gaps noticed.]

Record answers to the following questions:

What went well?

What do we need to improve on?

Was communication sufficient?

Is there a success that you would like to see repeated?

What was one gap in the emergency response plan?

What do we need to acquire or change to do or be better prepared for next heat season?

Planning Tip: Create a tracking spreadsheet to document when and how improvements to the heat emergency response plan are made.

Appendix D: Establishing Cooling Centers

Identifying and activating public cooling centers may help reduce the risk of heat-related illnesses. However, not all vulnerable people will visit cooling centers, so additional strategies should be implemented to prevent heat-related illnesses. When selecting locations for cooling centers, consider the following criteria:

Essential Site Selection Criteria

- Meets Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessibility standards
- Functional air conditioning
- Functional backup generator
- Easy to reach by public transportation

Additional Considerations

- Pet policy
- Overnight cooling
- Commercial kitchen
- Storage for drinking water, medications, and first aid supplies
- Maintain a daily log of use, medical incidents, and general needs (water, medications, transportation, etc.)

Tip: Additional suggestions for setting up a cooling center can be found on page 28 of the [Minnesota Extreme Heat Toolkit \(PDF\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/climate/docs/mnextremeheattoolkit.pdf) (<https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/climate/docs/mnextremeheattoolkit.pdf>).

Fill out below to help identify cooling center sites.

Facility Name: [name]

Address: [address, city, state, zip code]

Contact Person: [name, preferred phone, email]

Capacity: [capacity]

Transportation Route: [route]

Pet Friendly? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Backup Generator? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Kitchen? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Facility Name: [name]

Address: [address, city, state, zip code]

Contact Person: [name, preferred phone, email]

Capacity: [capacity]

Transportation Route: [route]

Pet Friendly? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Backup Generator? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Kitchen? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Facility Name: [name]

Address: [address, city, state, zip code]

Contact Person: [name, preferred phone, email]

Capacity: [capacity]

Transportation Route: [route]

Pet Friendly? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Backup Generator? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Kitchen? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Appendix E: Acronyms

Acronyms

AAR = After-Action Review

ADA = Americans with Disabilities Act

ED = Emergency Department

EM = Emergency Manager

EMS = Emergency Medical Services

MDH = Minnesota Department of Health

NWS = National Weather Service

PHPC = Public Health Preparedness Consultant

SUV = Sport Utility Vehicle

Appendix F: References

- [MDH Public Health Preparedness Consultant](https://www.health.state.mn.us/about/org/epr/phpc/index.html)
(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/about/org/epr/phpc/index.html>)
- [NWS Weather Forecast Offices](https://www.noaa.gov/jetstream/wfos) (<https://www.noaa.gov/jetstream/wfos>)
- [Minnesota Extreme Heat Toolkit \(PDF\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/climate/docs/mnextremeheat/toolkit.pdf)
(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/climate/docs/mnextremeheat/toolkit.pdf>)
- [Heat & Health Interactive Map](https://hmp-hub-umn.hub.arcgis.com/pages/heat) (<https://hmp-hub-umn.hub.arcgis.com/pages/heat>)
- [Video tutorial for the Heat & Health Interactive Map](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mnTBzJjBuxE)
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mnTBzJjBuxE>)
- [local National Weather Service office](https://verification.nws.noaa.gov/services/public/NWSOffices.html)
(<https://verification.nws.noaa.gov/services/public/NWSOffices.html>)
- [Heat index](https://www.weather.gov/ama/heatindex) (<https://www.weather.gov/ama/heatindex>)
- [NOAA National Weather Service HeatRisk](https://www.wpc.ncep.noaa.gov/heatrisk/) (<https://www.wpc.ncep.noaa.gov/heatrisk/>)
- [National Emergency Medical Services Information System \(NEMSIS\) Heat-Related EMS Activation Surveillance Dashboard](https://nemsis.org/heat-related-ems-activation-surveillance-dashboard/) (<https://nemsis.org/heat-related-ems-activation-surveillance-dashboard/>)
- [NEMSIS Heat-Related EMS Activation Surveillance Dashboard Companion Guide](https://wiki.utahdcc.org/confluence/spaces/NTD/pages/206274695/Heat-Related+EMS+Activation+Surveillance+Dashboard+EMS+HeatTracker+Companion+Guide)
(<https://wiki.utahdcc.org/confluence/spaces/NTD/pages/206274695/Heat-Related+EMS+Activation+Surveillance+Dashboard+EMS+HeatTracker+Companion+Guide>)
- [CDC National Syndromic Surveillance Program \(NSSP\) Electronic Surveillance System for the Early Notification of Community-based Epidemics \(ESSENCE\)](https://www.cdc.gov/nssp/php/onboarding-toolkits/essence.html)
(<https://www.cdc.gov/nssp/php/onboarding-toolkits/essence.html>)
- [MDH Public Health Reporting and Interoperability Program](https://www.health.state.mn.us/data/interoperability/syndromic.html)
(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/data/interoperability/syndromic.html>)
- [City of Chicago: Beat the Heat](https://www.chicago.gov/city/en/depts/oem/supp_info/MediaToolKits0/BeattheHeat.html)
(https://www.chicago.gov/city/en/depts/oem/supp_info/MediaToolKits0/BeattheHeat.html)
- [2025 District of Columbia Heat Plan \(PDF\)](https://mayor.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/mayormb/publication/attachments/2025_District_Heat_Plan.pdf)
(https://mayor.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/mayormb/publication/attachments/2025_District_Heat_Plan.pdf)
- [Aroostook County, Maine 2023 Extreme Temperature Plan \(PDF\)](https://aroostookema.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Aroostook-Extreme-Temperature-Plan-Signed-1.pdf)
(<https://aroostookema.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Aroostook-Extreme-Temperature-Plan-Signed-1.pdf>)
- [OSHA-NIOSH Heat Safety Tool](https://www.osha.gov/heat/heat-app) (<https://www.osha.gov/heat/heat-app>)
- [Know the Signs and Symptoms of Heat-Related Illnesses \(PDF\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/climate/docs/knowthesigns.pdf)
(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/climate/docs/knowthesigns.pdf>)