

A large, faint, stylized graphic of a human figure with arms and legs outstretched, centered in the background. The figure is composed of dark blue shapes against the blue background. Above the figure's head is a solid dark blue circle.

Extreme Heat: Community Response Planning

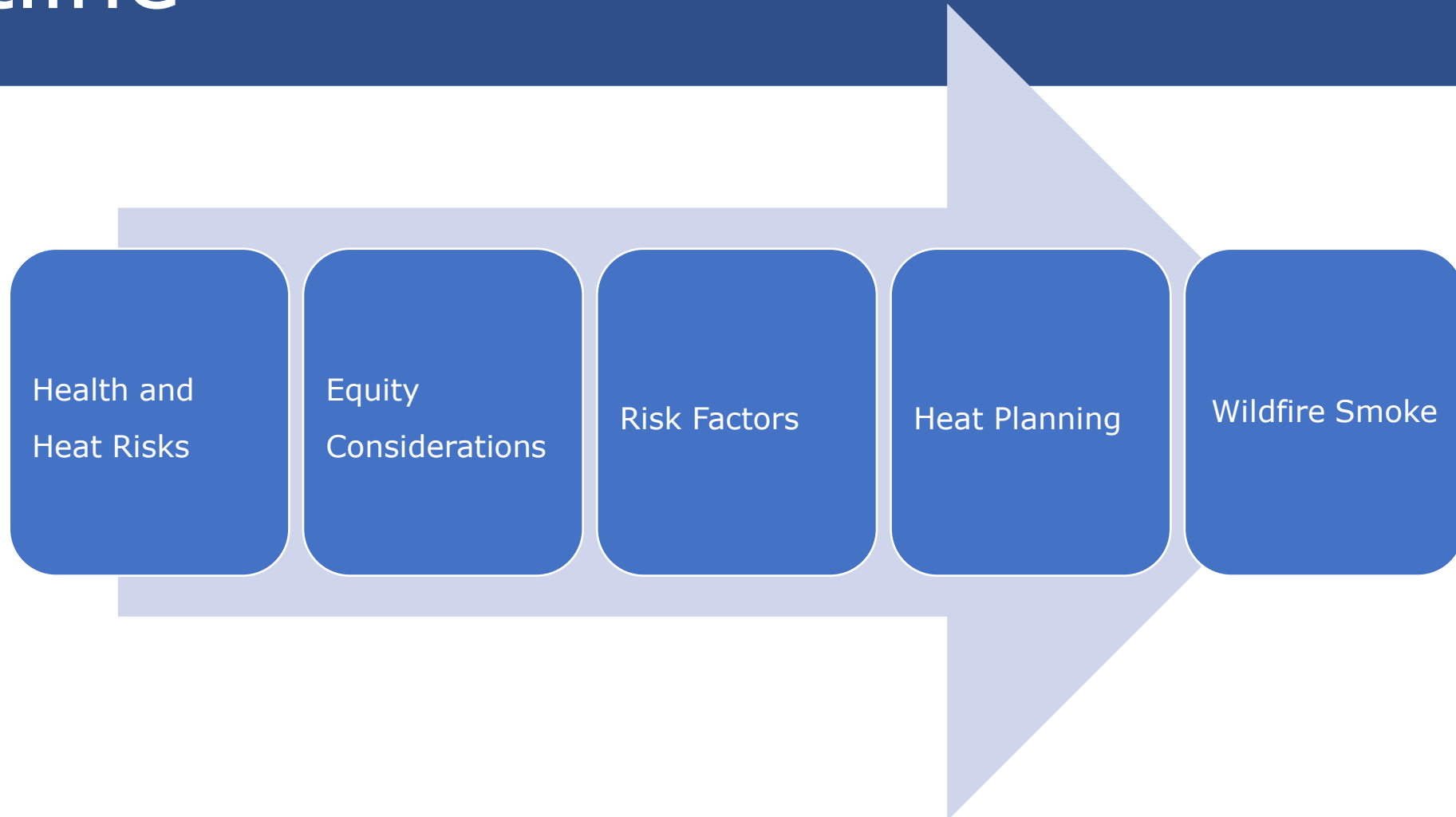
Marnie Brenner

Healthy Community Development | Population Health, IH

March 21, 2025

A horizontal bar at the bottom of the slide, divided into four colored segments: dark blue, cyan, yellow, and orange.

Outline



Extreme Heat and Health—Vulnerable Populations



Same Storm... Different Boats

Socially isolated

Elderly

Chronic health conditions

People with disabilities

Pregnant people

Location and place of residence

Insecurely-housed

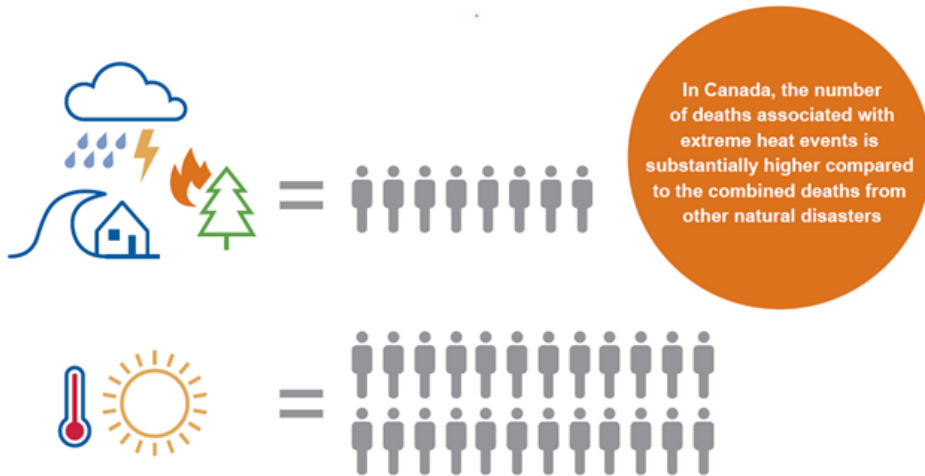
Infants and young children

Low-income

Outdoor workers



Heat Mortality in the IH Region



Heat-Related Deaths and Rates by Health Service Delivery Area (HSDA) of Injury, Jun 25 – July 1, 2021 ¹³		
Interior Health HSDA	# of Deaths	Crude Rate per 100,000
East Kootenay	4	4.6
Kootenay Boundary	3	3.6
Okanagan	32	7.8
Thompson Cariboo Shuswap	25	10.3
Total	64	

Heat-Related Deaths by Injury Location and Health Authority of Injury, June 25 – Jul 1, 2021	
Inside Residence	57
Outside	3
Public Building	1
Unknown	3
Total	64

Inside Residence – includes either decedent’s own or another’s residence, hotels/motels, rooming houses, SROs (single room occupancy), shelters, social/supportive housing, seniors’ homes, long term care facilities, nursing homes, etc.
Outside – includes vehicles, streets, sidewalks, parking lots, public parks, wooded areas, and campgrounds
Public Buildings – includes restaurants, community centres, post offices, businesses, etc.



Plan for Heat

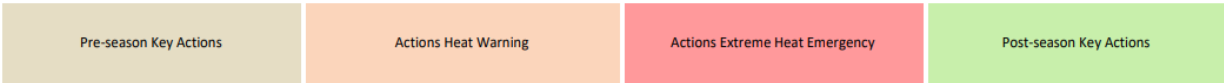
- Develop a community preparedness and response plan for extreme heat
- E.g. Williams Lake, 100 MH and Quesnel

BC Provincial Heat Alert and Response System (BC HARS): 2023

Heat Response Planning for Southern Interior B.C. Communities: A Toolkit June 2023

Interior Health

Figure 1 Factors that influence individual and community heat vulnerability (adapted from Health Canada 2012)



Share Information

- Share/distribute information package and resources on extreme heat
 - Use your communications channels
- Targeted efforts to reach people most at risk
 - Health & Social Department Staff
 - Partner Social Agencies
 - Etc.



A screenshot of a web page. At the top, there is a red banner with a white warning triangle icon and the text 'Heat Warning in Effect' and 'Learn about the heat warning issued for the Interior Health region and how to stay safe.' Below this is a teal horizontal bar. Underneath is the Interior Health logo, which consists of a stylized human figure with arms raised, followed by the text 'Interior Health'. Below the logo is a dark blue navigation bar with the text 'Home / Health & Wellness / Natural Disasters & Emergencies'. The main content area is also dark blue and features the heading 'Extreme Heat' in white. Below the heading is a paragraph: 'Be safe when the weather gets warm. Stay on top of extreme heat advisories, understand how heat alert and response systems operate in B.C. and learn about the impacts of heat on health.'



Wellness checks

- Check-in on folks who are most at-risk like Elders and those who are more isolated
 - Staff
 - Neighbours
 - Family/friends



HEAT CHECK-IN SUPPORT FRAMEWORK FOR NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS



Health checks during extreme heat events

A guide for doing in-person or remote health checks

Heat events can lead to dangerous indoor temperatures in homes without functioning air conditioning. Heat checks are used to assess how people at high risk of heat-related illness are during extreme events. In-person health-checks are best, but a remote health check is better than no health check.

Rapid risk assessment checklist

This checklist has five pages with information for doing health checks during extreme heat events.

PAGE 1 Rapid risk assessment checklist

PAGE 2 Recognizing and responding to heat-related illness

PAGE 3 In-person health checks

PAGE 4 Remote health checks

PAGE 5 Measuring body and room temperature

To assess whether someone is at risk, check all the personal factors that apply on the following list. The more boxes checked, the higher the potential risk.

<input type="checkbox"/> Older adult (60 years+)	The body's ability to cool itself is impaired as people age.
<input type="checkbox"/> Mental illness or cognitive impairment	Conditions such as schizophrenia, depression, anxiety, and dementia can reduce awareness of heat-related risks.
<input type="checkbox"/> Chronic disease	Chronic diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, respiratory disease, and cancer can limit the body's ability to cool.
<input type="checkbox"/> Living alone or socially isolated	People who live alone or do not have strong social connections are at higher risk because they have fewer people looking out for them.
<input type="checkbox"/> Substance dependency or use	The ability to sense and respond to heat can be affected by use of drugs or alcohol, especially for those who are dependent.
<input type="checkbox"/> Impaired or decreased mobility	People with impaired or reduced mobility might be less able to take protective measures during extreme heat events.
<input type="checkbox"/> Medication use	Some prescription medications for common conditions can cause dehydration and affect the body's ability to cool itself.
<input type="checkbox"/> Poor physical fitness	People who are not engaged in regular physical activity are less able to keep cool in the heat.

National Collaborating Centre for Environmental Health
Centre de collaboration nationale
pour la santé et l'environnement

www.nceh.ca

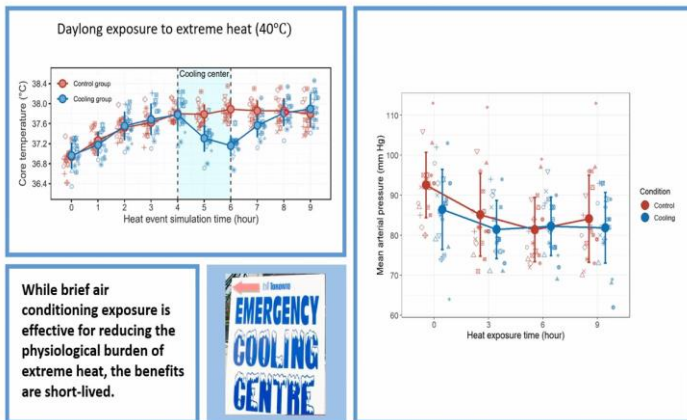
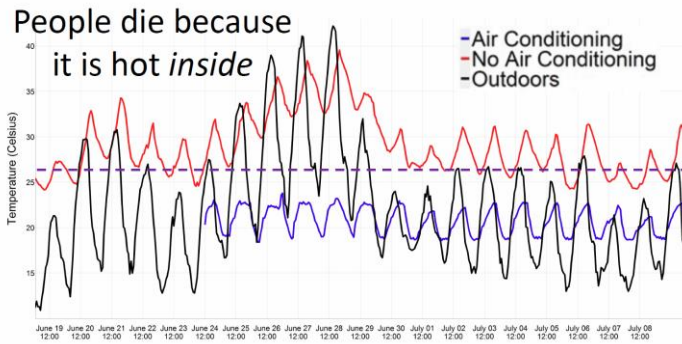


Cool Public Spaces

- Consider further extending hours of operation of pre-existing cool public spaces.
- Consider expanding the number of cool public spaces, and creating temporary cooling spaces (e.g., adding temporary air conditioning to existing gathering spaces, or setting up shaded outdoor cooling spaces, especially in community areas with less green or shaded areas)
- *Equity Considerations: reduce fees, provide transportation, neighbourhood options, low barrier*



Cool Places to Sleep



- Consider establishing overnight cooling centres to support populations.
- Share information about the risks of hot homes
- Encourage community members to stay with others who have A/C

Dr. G Kenny. University of Ottawa, BC Lung Foundation Conference, 2022



People Outside

- Outdoor Cooling Spaces (shade, misters)
- Distribute water to at-risk populations outdoors (e.g., portable water stations).
- Protect Outside Workers



BC Hydro: Air Conditioning Program

- Promote and support qualified community members to apply for the portable air conditioning unit program offered by BC Hydro

Free portable air conditioners



Apply now

Available for income qualified households and individuals referred by regional health authority programs



Community Actions for Wildfire Smoke

Sharing Information

- Stay notified through provincial monitory websites:
 - [Air Quality Health Index - BC Air Quality - Province of British Columbia \(gov.bc.ca\)](http://gov.bc.ca)
 - [Latest air quality data - Province of British Columbia \(gov.bc.ca\)](http://gov.bc.ca)
 - [Air quality advisories - Province of British Columbia \(gov.bc.ca\)](http://gov.bc.ca)
 - [WeatherCAN - Canada.ca](http://Canada.ca)
- Consider purchasing Purple Air monitors for the community:
 - [Products – PurpleAir, Inc.](http://PurpleAir.com)

Health Risk	AQHI Index	Health Messages	
		At Risk Population ¹	General Population
Low	1 - 3	Enjoy your usual outdoor activities.	Ideal air quality for outdoor activities.
Moderate	4 - 6	Consider reducing or rescheduling strenuous activities outdoors if you are experiencing symptoms.	No need to modify your usual outdoor activities unless you experience symptoms such as coughing and throat irritation.
High	7 - 10	Reduce or reschedule strenuous activities outdoors. Children and the elderly should also take it easy.	Consider reducing or rescheduling strenuous activities outdoors if you experience symptoms such as coughing and throat irritation.
Very High	Above 10	Avoid strenuous activities outdoors. Children and the elderly should also avoid outdoor physical exertion.	Reduce or reschedule strenuous activities outdoors, especially if you experience symptoms such as coughing and throat irritation.



Community Clean Air Locations

- Support Community members to minimize exposure to wildfire smoke and seek clean air spaces
- Community buildings should use HEPA Filtration systems
- Advertise clean air spaces in your community where people can seek refuge

Wildfire smoke symptoms:

- Sore throat
- Eye irritation
- Phlegm
- Mild cough
- Runny nose
- Headaches



Severe wildfire smoke symptoms:

- Shortness of breath
- Severe cough
- Heart palpitations
- Chest pain
- Wheezy breathing
- Dizziness



People with symptoms should be supported to promptly stop physical activity and seek cleaner air during smoky conditions. Those with severe symptoms should be supported to access medical attention.



Household Indoor Air Cleaners

- Commercial HEPA filters systems
- DIY air cleaners using a box fan and filter
 - *Always monitor DIY systems and consider using newer fans to reduce any possible fire hazards*



Being outside when it's Smoky

- Monitor Air Quality regularly and share information as needed
- Outside Workers & Work Safe resources
- Share information about the risks of smoky conditions with community members
- Distribute and encourage people to wear a respirator/mask



Outside Events

- Consider moving outdoor programs/events indoors
- Lower the intensity of exercise programs
- Provide lots of drinking water
- Have a back up plan
- Consider cancelling/re-scheduling events and programs



Working with Interior Health

Healthy Community Development Team

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HCD Team May 2023

Building Partnerships

- Supporting **collaborative partnerships** based on community needs and priorities
- **Connecting sectors**
- **Connecting communities with other IH teams**

Providing a Health Evidence & Equity Lens on Community Plans

- **Informing long range plans** such as Official Community Plans
- Providing responses to local government **land use planning referrals**

Building Capacity of Communities

- Supporting **grant application processes** including letters of support
- **Participating in** local government or community committees
- **Facilitating workshops**
- Providing **health/equity expertise, data, and best practices**

Sharing Effective Tools & Resources

- **Sharing best practices and examples** from other communities
- **Sharing grant opportunities**
- **Sharing new tools and resources** in our monthly newsletter

Recognizing & Celebrating

- **Recognizing great local work** in our monthly newsletter
- **Sharing community successes** with our provincial partners



Questions

