



Extreme Heat Response Guidance and Checklist

For Administrators

This heat response guidance and checklist is designed to help clinics and health centers maintain situational awareness and clinic operations during extreme heat events. It outlines actions to take when extreme heat is in the forecast and during an ongoing extreme heat event.

This guidance and checklist should be utilized proactively, ideally before an extreme heat event occurs, to ensure that the health center is well-prepared to handle the challenges associated with such an event. The checklist is designed for quick and easy use, allowing the weather resilience lead or other staff to efficiently confirm that all necessary precautions and actions have been taken.

When extreme heat is in the forecast and during an extreme heat event

- If you have not done so already, work with medical staff and resources in this toolkit to identify patients served in your clinic who are most vulnerable to heat risk.
- Develop a heat communication plan and activate it for at risk patients in the days before an extreme heat event occurs.
 - Either through the health center or a family member, high-risk patients should be assessed daily for:
 - Access and use of air conditioning (remind patient that 76° F is adequate, **over 80° F becomes dangerous**)
 - Signs of heat-related illness
 - Hydration (Are they drinking enough water?)
 - Appropriate clothing (Are they overdressed or wearing light / loose clothing?)
- See the [Heat Action Plan and Tip Sheet](#) resource in this toolkit for additional heat-illness prevention measures to be communicated and encouraged.
- Ensure protocols if a patient or staff experiences heat stroke. This should include calling 9-1-1 and aggressive cooling until EMS arrives. See the [Heat Action Plan and Tip Sheet](#).
- All patients and staff should be receiving response agency messaging. This may be an opt-in system. The Weather Resilience Lead should identify how to register and share this information with staff. Staff may need to walk patients through signing up for these alerts.
- Identify patients requiring routine, time sensitive treatments and / or lab tests (such as dialysis or INR levels). Work to get these patients scheduled ahead of an anticipated extreme heat event, or if they must come during times of extreme heat, try to have them travel early in the morning or into the evening when temperatures are lower.
- Identify scheduling opportunities.
 - Keep any open appointment times available for potential heat-related non-emergency visits.
 - Where possible, reschedule non-acute appointments to prevent patients from traveling in the heat. Patients at high-risk from heat should be prioritized for rescheduling if their appointment is not time sensitive. Consider telehealth where available.
- Address necessary changes in staff roles and responsibilities in line with the clinic's emergency plan.
 - If not a standard part of operations, institute morning huddles to discuss staff and patient needs and challenges and address any updates or changes.

- Monitor changes in public transit.
 - Heat can cause public transit to slow down or stop functioning entirely. Even where transit continues to function normally; ridership may decrease due to access issues (ex: unshaded bus stops). This affects both staff getting to work and patients getting to appointments.
- Reach out to local partners to confirm cooling center sites. Share this information with patients as needed, taking into consideration COVID and other infection prevention measures.
- **Check and test critical systems:**
 - Backup generator(s) or energy systems
 - Conduct test run
 - Check fuel
 - Confirm full battery storage
 - Test solar panel output
 - Air conditioners or heat pump systems
 - Fans
 - Water systems and water fountains
- **Supplies**
 - Check with vendors to ensure your facility is on their priority list for:
 - Refueling
 - Equipment repairs
 - Consider acquiring supplies to help patients and staff remain cool:
 - Purchase or rent freezers to store ice
 - IV fluids
 - Water and electrolyte powders/drinks
 - Ice packs
 - Popsicles or other cool refreshments
 - Spray bottles (to accompany fan use)
 - Foot submersion buckets
 - Hydration stations

Communications alert plan

When extreme heat is in the forecast, it is crucial to activate the communications alert plan to ensure that all staff, patients, and relevant stakeholders are informed and prepared. The Weather Resilience Lead should initiate the plan by notifying the site manager and using the established communication procedures outlined below:

Done	Task	Assigned to
✓	Inform the site manager of the extreme heat forecast (HeatRisk).	Weather Resilience Lead
✓	Use established communications procedures to notify staff that extreme heat is in the forecast and clinic operations will be adjusted. That could include text messages to staff mobile phones or emails.	Weather Resilience Lead
✓	Check local government sites (department of health or emergency management) for information on activated cooling centers in the area, to know where to direct patients. If no centers are established, identify community spaces with A/C such as libraries, malls, or community centers.	Weather Resilience Lead

Communications alert plan (continued)



Done	Task	Assigned to
✓	Postpone non-essential tasks that involve intense activity or heat exposure. If activity must be performed in high temperatures, consider additional breaks for staff in shade or A/C and ample access to cool water.	Clinic Supervisor
✓	Notify patients if appointments need to be rescheduled. Work with clinicians to decide who may be too high risk to travel to the clinic.	Front Desk Staff
✓	Consider telehealth for high-risk patients.	Clinicians
✓	Consider working with local transport service providers to bring in high-risk patients who lack transportation. Weather Resilience Lead	Weather Resilience Lead
✓	Check the condition of any medication or equipment that may be affected by extreme heat and relocate them away from windows, doors, or upper floors.	Weather Resilience Lead
✓	Provide information on heat informational resources to patients, see Extreme Heat Communications Template .	Weather Resilience Lead

Facility infrastructure checklist



Done	Task	Assigned to
✓	Check all blinds are operable and closed.	
✓	Inspect all windows to verify that all windows seal appropriately to prevent heat from getting in or air conditioning from getting out.	
✓	Place electric fans in exam rooms and lobbies as needed to circulate cool air. Consider the spread of airborne infectious diseases when placing fans.	
✓	Indoor humidity should be kept between 30-50%. Consider utilizing a humidifier or dehumidifier based on indoor conditions.	
✓	Check that all water fountains are working properly.	
✓	Preposition cooling supplies and heat safety information for patients near entrance.	
✓	Shut off lights and additional heat generating equipment where possible.	

Refrigeration



Done	Task	Assigned to
✓	Check the temperature of refrigerators in the morning and in the afternoon to ensure medications and vaccines are being kept at appropriate temperatures during extreme heat events.	
✓	Identify staff responsible for monitoring temperature and steps to take if medicine and vaccines need to be relocated.	
✓	Check that emergency generators or battery packs are connected to refrigerator to keep them running during a power outage.	

Emergency power

The facility should be able to maintain enough power to continue operating with essential services and therefore, should have an emergency generator, solar panels, or other source of power. Whether a generator is preinstalled, portable, or rented, the facility should be ready to utilize back up power sources at any moment during an extreme heat event.



Done	Task	Assigned to
✓	Run the emergency generator(s) and check fuel/energy levels prior to a heat wave.	
✓	Communicate what will be powered on back-up generators (e.g., which outlets, lighting, etc.) and an expectation of how long back up power can be expected to last. [this requires having an inventory]	
✓	Identify staff in charge of overseeing generator fuel/energy levels and refueling as needed.	
✓	Identify a safe and cool place to store an emergency supply of fuel for generators.	
✓	Check the air temperature in the clinic every 1-2 hours. Temperature should not exceed 80°F.	
✓	Contact vendors with fuel supplies (to ensure they will follow through on any agreements) prior to the heat wave beginning.	
✓	Contact utility companies about Critical Infrastructure and Key Resources (CIKR) information.	

