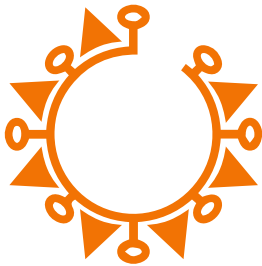


PLANNING CHECKLIST

MANAGING HEAT RISK DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

This checklist is for local and national authorities coordinating heatwave preparedness and response measures.

It provides a list of measures to consider when adapting heatwave plans and interventions in the context of the COVID-19 outbreak.



Disclaimer: The suggestions in this checklist will not be applicable in all contexts. Please review these measures and use the context of your city or locality as a guide to which actions you should implement.

These suggestions focus mainly on heat action measures which may be affected by COVID-19, and may require adaptation to the local context. Interventions that are unlikely to be affected are not listed here. For general heat action guidance see additional resources listed at the end of this document. These ideas are based on existing guidance and peer-reviewed information, as well as expert opinion.



VULNERABLE GROUPS AND SOCIAL SERVICES

The people who are most vulnerable to hot weather and COVID-19 include older people (over age 65); those with pre-existing medical conditions such as heart disease, respiratory illness or diabetes; those taking certain medications; those who are overweight and obese; those who are marginalized and isolated, including those experiencing homelessness; pregnant women and people wearing personal protective equipment (PPE) in places that are not temperature controlled.

People infected with, or recovering from, COVID-19 are presumed more vulnerable to heat stress, including outdoor workers returning to the workplace.

Vulnerable populations may be in more precarious social and economic conditions due to COVID-19, including from lost wages, increased isolation, and strains or gaps in social networks. This can increase vulnerability to heat risk by limiting healthcare access, transport options, food security and utility access.

- Identify your high risk communities by reviewing where local heat islands occur, and where this may overlap with high incidence or risk of COVID-19.
- Increase the use of [telephone outreach programmes](#) for regular check-ins with the most vulnerable during hot weather to reduce the need for face-to-face interactions due to COVID-19. Social service partners, general practitioners and local authorities can help with setting up a system. If there is a system already in place, consider advertising it to increase enrolment.
- Review plans for in-home safety checks. Ensure the health and safety of outreach staff and volunteers and the people they visit through training and the provision of PPE.
- Coordinate with formal and informal social service systems to identify vulnerable individuals and reach them more effectively with key messages and support.
- Review and expand social safety net programmes to support at-home cooling strategies for the most vulnerable people. For example, energy subsidies could be provided to at-risk households to ensure they can afford home cooling measures.

See Q&As on social services and vulnerable groups →



PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS

- Keep messaging clear and short, use plain language and avoid unnecessary jargon. Appropriate language versions may be necessary to reach high risk communities.
- Mention that COVID-19 transmission does not decrease during hot weather. [Exposure to sun and hot temperatures will increase heat stress and does not prevent or cure COVID-19.](#)
- Adjust standard heatwave messaging to include examples of guidance that can be followed while adhering to physical distancing, including information on changes in access to public spaces and cooling facilities.
- Increase awareness that people infected with, or recovering from, COVID-19 are likely more vulnerable to heat stress.
- Ensure that frontline COVID-19 responders who are in contact with the public are well informed about heatwave risks and convey approved messages to the most vulnerable.
- Identify and address local risk perceptions, myths, and concerns about heatwaves and COVID-19.
- Consider the ways in which heatwave messaging may be received or acted upon differently due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Proactively address these concerns in public messaging and provide clarity on the mitigating measures that are in place. For example, people may be reluctant to go to cooling centres or to seek emergency medical help, even when critical.
- Use a range of communication channels (newspapers, radio, television, social media, etc.) to maximize the reach of messaging on heatwaves while maintaining physical distancing measures for COVID-19.



COORDINATION

- Coordinate with relevant authorities and implementing partners in advance of a heatwave to review COVID-19 restrictions, how these impact local heatwave risks and management plans.
- Coordinate with the national meteorological service to align hot weather advisory messages and make any adjustments to advisory thresholds considering additional vulnerabilities due to COVID-19
- Coordinate public messaging across different levels of government to minimize the risk of heatwave messaging contradicting COVID-19 messaging.
- Integrate heat risk planning into ongoing COVID-19 coordination discussions.
- Coordinate with health services and utility providers (see below).



HEALTH SERVICES

- Prepare health facilities for a surge in admissions in the event of a heatwave, which may be on top of a surge due to COVID-19. Ensure that triage staff can distinguish between hyperthermia and fever.
- Ensure that telehealth systems are prepared to handle an influx of calls about heat stress symptoms and provide at-home cooling advice where possible.
- Deploy mobile cooling units in hospitals and clinics In hospitals and clinics without air-conditioning to reduce heat stress on patients with the respiratory symptoms of COVID-19, and on staff wearing PPE.
- Ensure that critical care facilities – such as hospitals, care homes and retirement villages – have back-up power supplies for critical functions including cooling, refrigeration, as well as water security; test these systems. As there may be delays in the supply chain due to COVID-19, consider ordering critical spare parts to have on standby.
- Mass casualties could result from a combination of COVID-19 and a severe heatwave. [See example good practice.](#)

See Q&As on PPE and heat stress, clinic heat stress, and checklist for family doctors →



INDOOR COOLING

- Advertise and communicate low-cost, low-tech indoor cooling options, particularly to vulnerable populations, such as closing windows and blinds during the day, creating nighttime cross breezes, drinking cool water before feeling thirsty, and wetting clothing.
- All air conditioning and industrial ventilation systems for both residential and high occupancy buildings should be inspected, maintained, and cleaned regularly to prevent COVID-19 transmission.
- The use of fans is advised where there is only one person in a room. In collective spaces, when several people are present in this space, the use of fans for air circulation/cooling is not advised particularly in spaces with minimal outside air exchange. If fans are used, take steps to minimize air blowing from one person directly at another to reduce the potential spread of any airborne or aerosolized viruses.

See Q&As on low-tech cooling options and air-conditioning/ventilation →



UTILITIES

- Ensure the providers of life-sustaining utilities (water, energy and internet/communications) do not cut customers' services if they fail to pay their bills.
- Anticipate and prepare for energy demand shifts from commercial and industrial centers to residential centers - as well as the return to commercial and industrial centers as restrictions are lifted.
- Plan for how to continue COVID-19 operations in the event of a heat triggered power-outage that may affect critical services.
- In neighbourhoods with limited access to utilities – such as informal settlements – strategies to increase access to these life-sustaining services should be implemented (for example, installing additional standpipes, delivering safe water by tanker, cooling facilities, etc.)



OUTDOOR PUBLIC SPACES

- Encourage the use of outdoor cool spaces during hot weather and heatwaves, while respecting local rules to minimize COVID-19 transmission.
- Display signage on physical distancing and enforce where appropriate.
- Identify additional outdoor public spaces that can be used for cooling to reduce crowding and reconsider any exclusionary policies (e.g. opening hours or entrance fees) that may discourage the most vulnerable from accessing the space.
- Increase the availability of outdoor public spaces in dense urban areas. Examples include temporarily closing or limiting vehicle access to certain streets to become pedestrian areas, and installing temporary shade structures.
- Consider extending opening hours of parks and outdoor cool spaces to increase access and limiting opening hours of outdoor open markets during the hottest part of the day.
- Close high-touch structures like playgrounds and exercise equipment to prevent the spread of COVID-19.
- Follow local guidance on the use of swimming pools and recreational waters, while following COVID-19 control measures. [See example local guidance here.](#)
- Handwashing sinks in public toilet facilities and drinking water fountains should remain open and be disinfected frequently (at least once a day.) Hands free technologies are optimal where available.

See Q&As on outdoor cool spaces →



COOLING CENTRES

- Review the availability of listed cooling centres and check whether they are still willing/able to offer cooling spaces. Assess the need for additional cooling centres to account for reduced occupancy at existing locations.
- Consider physical layout of facilities and needs for separating spaces, clearly marking one-way circulation paths, etc. which increase physical distance.
- Prioritize cooling center access to those who are most vulnerable to extreme heat in the event that demand exceeds occupancy restrictions.
- Collect contact information according to local protocols for all visitors to cooling centres in case of the need for contact tracing.
- Work with health authorities to provide cooling facilities for COVID-19 patients with mild symptoms. Raise awareness of the difference between signs of heat stress and fever.
- Offer voluntary registration for the most vulnerable to receive heatwave check-ins, where systems exist.
- Post signs at entrances and in strategic places at all cooling centres providing guidance on recognizing the symptoms of COVID-19 as well as highlighting the importance of hand hygiene, respiratory hygiene, cough etiquette, and wearing face masks.
- Provide educational materials about COVID-19, as well as the details of mental health and social support resources.
- Ensure that everyone at the cooling centre is wearing a face mask and maintaining a social sufficient space between people (e.g. 1.5-2 metres / 6-10 feet) as locally recommended, unless they are from the same household. Simple face masks should be made available for anybody who needs one.
- Ensure staff and volunteers are equipped with and trained to use appropriate PPE.
- Plan for potential staff sickness absences and cross-train essential staff to ensure continuity of operations.
- Ensure the adequate supply of water for drinking/cooling and handwashing/hygiene.
- Ensure that each cooling centre is frequently cleaned and disinfected to minimize the spread of COVID-19, following local guidelines.

See Q&As on cooling centres and air-conditioning/ventilation →



WORKFORCE

- Set up internal communication systems to ensure all relevant staff are aware of, and regularly updated on, guidance and risks related to COVID-19 and heat.
- For construction, gardening, delivery, civil protection, and other outdoor workers, consider changing working hours to cooler parts of the day (morning and early evening), introducing shifts and cooling breaks, encouraging hydration by drinking water before service and before feeling thirsty, as well as onsite physical distancing measures to reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[Heat and COVID-19 Q&A Series](#)

Global Heat Health Information Network (2020)

[WHO Country & Technical Guidance - Coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\)](#)

WHO (2020)

[Health advice for hot weather during the COVID-19 outbreak](#)

WHO (2020)

[Public health advice on preventing health effects of heat](#)

WHO (2011)

[Heatwaves and Health: Guidance on Warning-System Development](#)

WHO / WMO (2015)

[Heatwave Guide for Cities](#)

Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre (2019)