

# Crisis and Emergency Communication Toolkit for Extreme Heat



Developed for Oregon Local Health Departments by the  
Oregon Health Authority, Public Health Division  
Health Security, Preparedness, and Response Program

**NOTE: This document replaces and supersedes  
all previous versions of the communication toolkit  
for extreme heat events.**

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

Revision History ..... 3

Introduction..... 4

Key Messages for Extreme Heat..... 5

Talking Points for Extreme Heat..... 6

Sample Press Release #1 for Extreme Heat..... 7

Sample Press Release #2 for Extreme Heat..... 9

Fact Sheets for Extreme Heat..... 11

Public Health Webpages for Extreme Heat..... 12

Spanish Language Resources for Extreme Heat ..... 13

Social Media Messages for Extreme Heat..... 14

<b>REVISION HISTORY</b>		
<b>Summary of changes</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Point of Contact</b>
First version created based on CERC phases	2013	Talia Gad, Kathleen Vidoloff
Updated toolkit to include crisis only information based on 2013 survey of LHDs and tribes; updated press releases and added extreme heat FAQ URL	2014	Kathleen Vidoloff, Melissa Powell

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication Toolkit for Extreme Heat has been designed to assist with messaging during and after an extreme heat event. The most likely health impacts from an Extreme Heat emergency include the following:

- Heat stress
- Heat stroke
- Heat exhaustion

In order to effectively and efficiently use the communication materials included in this Toolkit, the following items from your county's or tribe's communication plan are necessary:

- Media Contact List
- Local Partners Contact List
- Special Populations Agency List or 911 Card Registry
- Policies for Clearance
- Policies for Disseminating Messages

Also, for resources specific to Extreme Heat, please refer to your local health department's emergency operations plan.

## KEY MESSAGES FOR EXTREME HEAT

The Crisis Phase is characterized by uncertainty, shortened response time, and intense media interest. The public is seeking timely and accurate facts about what happened, where it happened, and what is being done to address the crisis. They will question the magnitude of the crisis, the immediacy of the threat to them, the duration of the threat, and who is going to fix it.

Communicators should be prepared to answer these questions as quickly, accurately, and fully as possible. Simplicity, credibility, verifiability, consistency, and speed count when communicating in the initial phases of an emergency.



**Goal: Provide up-to-date and accurate information to empower decision-making and prompt action**

- Provide available information on current event
- Explain the risks of this hazard
- Provide self-efficacy messages about safety and how and where to get more information
- Explain the process of what your local health department is doing

## TALKING POINTS FOR EXTREME HEAT

### REDUCING HEAT-RELATED ILLNESSES DURING EXTREME HEAT

- Stay cool, stay hydrated, and stay informed.
- Extremely high temperatures can affect your health, and heat-related illness is preventable.
- Those most at risk for heat-related illness include adults over 65, people who work outdoors, children under 4, and those with chronic illness.
- Drink plenty of fluids regardless of your level of activity even if you are not thirsty. Drink between 2-4 cups per hour while working outside. Avoid sugary, caffeinated, and alcoholic drinks.
- Limit sun exposure from 11 a.m.-5 p.m., and try to schedule outdoor activities in the early morning or later evening.
- Dress yourself and your children in loose, light-weight, light-colored clothing that covers the skin. Wear sunglasses and wide-brimmed hat.
- Apply sunscreen with SPF 15 or more 10 minutes before going out; re-apply every two hours.
- Never leave infants, children, or pets in a parked car.
- Check at least once a day on neighbors, family, and friends over 65 or living with chronic illness.
- Learn the symptoms of heat-related illness, and call 911 when there are signs of heat stroke

## **SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE #1 FOR EXTREME HEAT**

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

CONTACT: [Name]  
[County] Health Department  
Phone [(XXX) XXX-XXXX]  
Email [email address]

**[Agency] Advises People to Take Precautions during Extreme Heat**  
*Residents are advised to stay cool, stay hydrated, and stay informed.*

[CITY NAME, OREGON] – With the forecast for the week predicted to be 90 degrees and above for many regions of the state, the Oregon Health Authority is reminding people to take precautions to avoid heat-related illnesses, such as heat cramps, heat stroke and heat exhaustion.

"Heat-related illnesses can come on quickly," said [insert name], "and we may not even recognize the symptoms. There are some simple common-sense precautions to take to keep yourself and your family safe during extended periods of heat. This is especially important for children and seniors who are more at risk for heat-related illnesses. Whenever possible stay inside air-conditioning, drink plenty of fluids – water is best, avoid caffeine and alcohol and large amounts of sugar, wear light clothing and limit outdoor activities during the hottest part of the day."

Heat is the number one weather-related killer in the United States resulting in hundreds of fatalities each year and claiming more lives each year than floods, lightning, tornadoes, and hurricanes combined. The most vulnerable individuals are those who work or exercise outdoors, adults over 65, infants and children under 4, the homeless or poor, and people with a chronic medical condition.

Take the necessary precautions to prevent serious health effects such as heat exhaustion or heat stroke.

#### *Stay cool*

- Stay in air-conditioned buildings.
- Contact the [Health Department or other appropriate contact] at [phone number] or [website] to locate an air-conditioned shelter in your area.
- Do not rely on a fan as your primary cooling device.
- Limit outdoor activity, especially midday when it is the hottest part of the day, and avoid direct sunlight.
- Wear loose, lightweight, light-colored clothing.
- Take cool showers or baths to lower your body temperature.
- Check on at-risk friends, family, and neighbors at least twice a day.

*Stay hydrated*

- Drink more water than usual, and don't wait until you're thirsty to drink.
- Drink from two to four cups of water every hour while working or exercising outside.
- Avoid alcohol or liquids containing high amounts of sugar.
- Make sure your family, friends, and neighbors are drinking enough water.

*Stay informed*

- Check your local news for extreme heat warnings and safety tips.
- Keep your friends, family, and neighbors aware of weather and heat safety information.

**Helpful links**

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:  
[www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/extremeheat/](http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/extremeheat/)  
[www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/heatstress/](http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/heatstress/)

#

###

**[Press release formatting notes:**

- First page header has the agency / department heading / logo.
- Bottom center of every page before the last has the word "more" in lowercase and between dashes, like so: -more-
- Page headers on each page except the first has the word Event flush left.
- Three center-aligned hash tags / pound signs mark the end of the press release.]
- If this press release is copied and pasted into a blank Word document for editing and release, it is possible that the red bar will be imported along with the rest of the contents. If this happens, it can be deleted by selecting the red bar and clicking Delete.
- Delete these notes.

## **SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE #2 FOR EXTREME HEAT**

CONTACT: [Name]  
[County] Health Department  
Phone [(XXX) XXX-XXXX]  
Email [email address]

### **Health authorities remind people to avoid heat-related illnesses**

[CITY NAME, OREGON] – As Oregon prepares for excessive heat, the Oregon Health Authority reminds people to take the necessary precautions to avoid heat-related illnesses.

“Many people can be at risk for illness during periods of extreme heat,” says [insert name]. “We want everyone to arm themselves with information so they know how to stay safe this summer.”

Heat stroke is a serious illness characterized by a body temperature greater than 105 degrees. Symptoms may include dry red skin, convulsions, disorientation, delirium and coma. Onset of heat stroke can be rapid; serious symptoms can occur within minutes. Treatment involves the rapid lowering of body temperature using a cool bath or wet towels. Keep victims of heat stroke in a cool area and immediately call 911.

Heat exhaustion is a milder form of heat stroke that may develop due to a combination of several days with high temperatures and dehydration in an individual. Signs of heat exhaustion include extreme weakness, muscle cramps, nausea or headache. Victims may also vomit or faint. Heat exhaustion is treated with plenty of liquids and rest in a cool, shaded area. Those on a low-sodium diet or with other health problems should contact a doctor.

#### Hot weather tips:

- Drink plenty of fluids, such as water and fruit juice, to prevent dehydration. Alcohol can impair the body’s sweat mechanism, as can some common medications, such as antihistamines and diuretics.
- Wear loose-fitting, lightweight and light-colored clothes.
- Avoid direct sunlight by staying in the shade and wear sunscreen, a wide-brimmed hat and sunglasses.
- Stay in air-conditioned areas when possible. If your home is not air-conditioned, consider a visit to a shopping mall or public library or stay with family or friends who have air conditioning. Contact your local health department to see if there are cooling shelters open in your area.
- NEVER leave pets or children in a car, even with the windows cracked.
- Check on elderly relatives or neighbors at least daily, and make sure they have a cool environment to live in during extreme heat.

- Take it easy when outdoors. Athletes and those who work outdoors should take short breaks when feeling fatigued. Schedule physical activity during the morning or evening when it is cooler.

Anyone can be overcome by extreme heat, but some people are at higher risk than others. They include the elderly, the very young, and people with mental illness and chronic diseases.

### Helpful links

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:  
[www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/extremeheat/](http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/extremeheat/)  
[www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/heatstress/](http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/heatstress/)

###

- First page header has the agency / department heading / logo.
- Bottom center of every page before the last has the word “more” in lowercase and between dashes, like so: -more-
- Page headers on each page except the first has the word Event flush left.
- Three center-aligned hash tags / pound signs mark the end of the press release.]
- If this press release is copied and pasted into a blank Word document for editing and release, it is possible that the red bar will be imported along with the rest of the contents. If this happens, it can be deleted by selecting the red bar and clicking Delete.
- Delete these notes.

## **FACT SHEETS AND FAQs FOR EXTREME HEAT**

The following fact sheets are available for download. If your agency needs these documents in additional formats, please contact your [preparedness or hospital liaison](#). (Note: Click on button next to “Staff” to find your liaison).

### **FAQs on extreme heat and public health**

[http://public.health.oregon.gov/Preparedness/Prepare/Documents/FrequentlyAskedQuestionsforExtremeHeat\\_5.20.14.pdf](http://public.health.oregon.gov/Preparedness/Prepare/Documents/FrequentlyAskedQuestionsforExtremeHeat_5.20.14.pdf)

### **CDC’s Extreme Heat Preparedness page**

<http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/extremeheat/>

## **PUBLIC HEALTH WEBPAGES FOR EXTREME HEAT**

### **Oregon's Extreme Heat Preparedness page**

<http://public.health.oregon.gov/Preparedness/Prepare/Pages/PrepareForExtremeHeat.aspx>

### **CDC's Extreme Heat Preparedness page**

<http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/extremeheat/>

### **American Red Cross Heat Wave Safety page**

<http://www.redcross.org/prepare/disaster/heat-wave>

### **Heat Stress in the Elderly**

<http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/extremeheat/elderlyheat.asp>

### **For employers**

#### **CDC website on Heat Stress**

<http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/heatstress/>

#### **OSHA Heat Illness website**

<http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/heatillness/index.html>

#### **Educational Resources: Fact Sheets, Posters, and Training Materials**

<http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/heatillness/edresources.html>

#### **News Releases, Press Teleconference Materials, and Other Media-Related Documents**

<http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/heatillness/mediaresources.html>

## SPANISH LANGUAGE RESOURCES FOR EXTREME HEAT

As Spanish is the language spoken by 60% of limited English proficiency Oregonians, the following are resources for Spanish language emergency public health messaging on extreme heat.

**Centers for Disease Control and Prevention** “Extreme Heat and Your Health” / “Calor Extremo y Su Salud” – [http://www.cdc.gov/extremeheat/index\\_esp.html](http://www.cdc.gov/extremeheat/index_esp.html)

Public health messages for a range of populations including infants and children, outdoor workers, athletes, and lower income individuals.

**American Red Cross** “Heat Wave Safety” / “Recursos Para Oleadas de Calor” – <http://www.redcross.org/cruz-roja/prepare/calor>

Safety tips for before and during a heat wave.

**Arizona Department of Health Services** “Extreme Weather and Public Health” / “Clima extremo y la Salud Pública” – <http://www.azdhs.gov/phs/oeh/heat/index.htm>

The range of Arizona’s materials includes toolkits for schools, older adults, and outdoor workers as well as general preparedness and safety information. The website itself isn’t in Spanish, but the heading of each English webpage has an “En Español” link, which uses Google Translate to make the information accessible to Spanish speakers.

**OSHA** (Occupational Safety and Health Administration) “Heat Illness Education Resources” – <http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/heatillness/edresources.html>

Designed for outdoor workers subject to extreme heat, all content is available in both English and Spanish. Resources include posters, training guides, employer information, and wallet cards.

## **SOCIAL MEDIA MESSAGES FOR EXTREME HEAT**

### **Twitter Messages**

*The following messages can be posted on your local health agency's Twitter feed. All posts are 140 or fewer characters.*

*In addition to the suggestions below, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's @CDCReady and @CDCEmergency feeds can be retweeted as relevant information and links are tweeted.*

- Extremely high or unusually hot temperatures can affect your health. Stay cool, stay hydrated, and stay informed!
- Heat-related illness is preventable. Stay cool, stay hydrated, and stay informed!
- Stay cool! Limit outdoor activity, and avoid direct sunlight - especially midday when it is hottest.
- Stay hydrated! Don't wait until you're thirsty to drink. Drink more water than usual, and avoid sugary, caffeinated, & alcoholic beverages.
- Stay informed! Heat is among the highest weather-related killers in the US.
- Stay cool! Reschedule or plan outdoor activities during cooler parts of the day.
- Stay hydrated! Drink from 2-4 cups of water every hour while working or exercising outside.
- Stay informed! People over 65 are vulnerable to heat. Visit neighbors, friends, and family members to make sure they're cool and hydrated.
- Stay cool! Take a break from the heat by spending a few hours in a cool place.
- Keep your pets cool! Lethargy and loss of appetite can be signs of dehydration. Always offer fresh water and shade where pets can cool off.

### **Facebook Posts**

*A benefit to posting on Facebook is that conversations can be had among fans (although this can require additional moderation).*

*All of the above tweets can be cross posted as Facebook messages, but the following suggestions have images and links that can also be posted. For more suggestions, visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Facebook page at*

<https://www.facebook.com/cdcemergency> to repost useful links, webpages, photos, and tips.

- Ever wonder the difference between heat stroke and heat exhaustion? Check out the CDC's Frequently Asked Questions page about extreme heat!  
<http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/extremeheat/faq.asp>

- It's HOT outside. Stay cool. Stay hydrated. Stay informed.



- What does it mean when the National Weather Service talks about the heat index?  
<http://www.nws.noaa.gov/os/heat/index.shtml#heatindex>
- CDC tips for athletes feeling the heat:  
<http://www.cdc.gov/extremeheat/pdf/athlete-poster-preview.pdf>
- Did you know that extreme heat is one of the leading weather-related killers in the United States? <http://www.nws.noaa.gov/os/heat/index.shtml>
- How do to stay cool on extremely hot days?
- Adults over 65 are among the most at-risk during extreme heat events. Pop by your neighbors', friends', and family members' home to ensure that they're drinking enough water and keeping their homes cool!

**[BACK COVER]**

**[THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK]**