



News Release



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 17, 2013
PH13-048

CONTACT: Alex Barnum, CalEPA
(916) 324-9670
Anita Gore, CDPH
(916) 440-7259

New Report Helps California Prepare for Extreme Heat

SACRAMENTO - With climate models projecting a significant increase in the frequency and duration of extreme heat, a workgroup lead by the California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA) and the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) developed recommendations to help the state become better prepared and more resilient to increasing temperature and extreme heat events. The recommendations were released today in a new report, "[Preparing California for Extreme Heat.](#)"

"With temperatures on the rise, we as a state should do all that we can to protect Californians from heat-related illnesses," said California Secretary for Environmental Protection Matthew Rodriguez. "This report offers a variety of ways that State and local agencies, working together, can help save lives."

During a 10-day heat wave in 2006, more than 650 Californians died due to heat-related conditions. "Extreme heat is one of the deadliest natural hazards and we must take action to reduce the negative health impacts on Californians," said California Department of Public Health Director and State Health Officer Dr. Ron Chapman.

Extreme heat poses a substantial health risk, especially in vulnerable populations including young children, the elderly, people with chronic diseases, pregnant women, people with a disability and people who are socially isolated. Heat-related illnesses include cramps, heat exhaustion and, most seriously, heat stroke and death.

As the climate changes in California, extreme heat is projected to be a growing problem. According to the report, urban and rural population centers throughout the state may experience an average of 40 to 53 extreme heat days annually by 2050, compared with a historical average of four extreme heat days per year.

Populations in cooler areas of the state may be at greater risk of heat-related illnesses, as these individuals are not used to heat. These populations may be less aware of how to reduce exposure, and homes and offices in these areas may be less equipped with air conditioning. Moreover, poorer urban communities face additional heat risks due to less access to air conditioning and fewer trees and cooling green spaces.

(more)

While the report's recommendations are intended to inform State agencies, the guidance is also relevant to local planners; local governments; emergency response; and public health and health care professionals and institutions. The recommendations include:

- Examine and expand the use of cooler pavements and roofs to lower nighttime surface temperatures.
- Promote and expand urban greening (e.g., planting of trees, using vegetation, restoring urban streams) to cool public and private spaces.
- Improve heat-health alert warnings used to trigger and guide response activities by local communities and health departments when heat waves are anticipated or underway.
- Improve community resilience to increasing heat events, particularly for vulnerable populations, by evaluating current preparedness and response strategies to determine their effectiveness in extreme weather.
- Expand energy assurance so that clean, cost effective and reliable energy is available to maintain essential services during extreme events. This would allow local planners to identify key facilities and services and ways to protect their operations during any power outage.
- Increase the health care system's extreme heat preparedness and resiliency by incorporating climate change projections into disaster preparedness plans.
- Identify the characteristics of vulnerable populations and communities that are highly resilient to heat in order to improve response and best practices to extreme heat.

The report was developed by the Heat Adaptation Workgroup of the State Climate Action Team (CAT), which is made up of State agency secretaries and heads of boards and departments. The CAT works to coordinate statewide efforts to implement global warming emission reduction programs and prepare the state for climate change risks. The Heat Adaptation Workgroup was co-chaired by the California Department of Public Health and the California Environmental Protection Agency. Staff from multiple State agencies worked collaboratively to develop this guidance document.

www.calepa.ca.gov

www.cdph.ca.gov