5 Simple Neighbourly Actions

to Get Ready for Extreme Heat Together

Welcome! Wondering what you can do to keep you and your neighbours safe during the next extreme heat event? Here are a few tips to get you started!

Get to know your neighbours

- Call neighbours you know or go door-to-door
- Host a "party with a purpose" or potluck dinner
- Host an "open house" coffee/tea hour





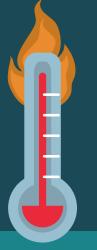
Set up a neighbour communication systems

- Create an email list or online group
- Install a community bulletin board or whiteboard
- Find neighbours who can help check in on others during extreme heat

Find a Buddy / Be a Buddy

- Pair up with another person and agree to check in on each other
- Leave postcards asking if neighbours need help with tasks or getting supplies
- Create a formal buddy system with a group of neighbours





Prepare to stay cool

- Sign up for heat alerts
- Distribute a map of nearby cooling centres to your neighbours
- Set up a "chill" room or area (with fun activities!)
- Purchase supplies to build "cool kits" together

Learn More

- Contact your local emergency management department or health authority and set up a heat preparedness workshop
- Read through the rest of this guide!



Prepare Together for Extreme Heat

Extremely hot weather can affect our health–sometimes seriously. But there are many things neighbours can do to reduce risks and help protect each other. During any emergency, no one is nearer than our neighbours, so we can sometimes be vital lifelines for each other!

This guide is designed for use by groups of neighbours as part of Building Resilient Neighbourhoods' "Connect & Prepare" program. However, it can also be used by anyone who simply wants to learn more and consider ways that they might be able to better protect themselves and help neighbours before or during extreme heat events.

In this guide, you will learn:

- quick tips for taking immediate action during extreme heat
- what we know about some of the main health risk factors during extreme heat
- how to reach out to gather neighbours for discussions about preparing together for extreme heat
- practical strategies for how neighbours can support each other before and during long periods of hot weather



It's Already Hot! - Quick tips for taking immediate action

Is an extreme heat event already here, and so you don't have time to plan together with neighbours? Here are some quick tips for ways to stay safe now-and help your neighbours, too.

- Cool quickly. Submerge your feet and legs in cold water. Cover your skin with wet
 clothes or towels. Mist yourself with a spray bottle filled with water. Place a layer of
 cardboard or tin foil to help block sunny windows. Go to the lowest floor or basement of
 the building you're in, or seek out a public "cool zone" such as a cooling centre, a public
 library, shopping mall or community centre. If you go outdoors, take rest often in shaded
 cooler areas such as large treed parks or near a body of water.
- **Get more cooling advice.** Jump to Step 3 in this guide, "Learn about the risks," to find more safety instructions, tips and resources for extreme heat.
- Distribute information, alerts and tips to neighbours. Print out and knock on
 doors to distribute all or part of this guide, post an extreme heat safety resource
 in an apartment lobby, laundry room, or neighbourhood bulletin board, deliver
 information to people in their mailboxes, or make use of any other
 communication channels you already have with neighbours.
 - Share a list or map of "chill zones." Find a list or map of cooling centres –
 often available on local government websites and share it with your
 neighbours. Do you know of any other cool, accessible indoor or outdoor
 spaces or places nearby that you could remind your neighbours about?
 - Check in with neighbours regularly and offer help. If you already know some
 of your neighbours, or feel comfortable reaching out, read through this guide
 and decide what actions you can start on your own. Could you begin a buddy
 check-in system with a few people, run errands for people at higher risk, or
 offer rides to a cooling centre?
 - Get connected for future preparation. Knock on doors and leave your contact information, inviting neighbours to get in touch to work through this guide together!



Plan Ahead! - Prepare with neighbours for extreme heat

Step 1: Reach Out

Start by finding and gathering fellow neighbours who are also interested in discussing and planning for extreme heat. Ask a few neighbours whom you already know to help spread the word, put invitation posters in common areas, or hand out flyers door-to-door. Suggest that people respond, so you know how many to expect. You might find this sample Invitation to Neighbour-to-Neighbour Heat Planning (forthcoming) helpful for reaching out to neighbours.

Note: If you'd rather just try to gather neighbours for a specific action first (rather than gathering to decide on possible activities), you can jump to Step 5!



TIP:

If you would like more tips on how to engage your neighbours, see Building Resilient Neighbourhoods' guide Engage Your Neighbours (forthcoming).

Step 2: Gather Neighbours

Meet with fellow neighbours in a common space or someone's home, or online using Zoom, Messenger, Skype, or another meeting platform. It's usually easiest to meet in person; but if it's necessary to meet online, be sure to ask people when they respond what technologies they are comfortable with.

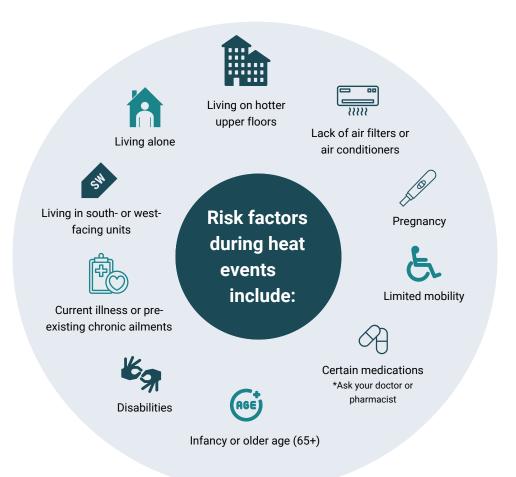
Step 3: Learn about the risks of extreme heat

Consider circulating a copy of this guide, or some of the educational materials about extreme heat listed below, to participants ahead of the meeting. Alternatively, allow time at the meeting for everyone to read through a selection of the materials below.

What You Need to Know about Extreme Heat

"Extreme heat" is said to occur when high temperatures pose serious risks to human health. Many homes and cities in BC were not designed for managing extreme heat; so, in general, experts suggest to be on alert when daytime and overnight temperatures are higher than seasonal norms for your area, and may also be rising each day.

Due to climate changes, extreme heat events in BC are expected to become hotter, last longer, and occur more often in future. Some people are at higher risks than others, and effects on human health can range from mild heat rashes and fatigue to heat stroke and even death.



Prolonged heat may also cause mental fogging and confusion, making it difficult for a person to help themselves. So, one of the best ways to stay safe is to know the risks and check in on each other during hot weather – This is how neighbours preparing together can help save lives!

For more information, see the following resources. Check with your local municipal emergency management department or health authority for additional information that is relevant for your community.



Heat Alerts - <u>WeatherCan</u> (Government of Canada), <u>Vic-Alert</u> (City of Victoria), <u>Alertable</u> (City of Vancouver): By signing up for these alert systems, you will be notified of potentially dangerous hot weather coming to your area.



Extreme Heat: This simple, educational poster/handout highlights who is at higher risk in extreme heat, how to spot heat-related illness, and strategies to stay cool. (Available in multiple languages!)



<u>Tips to Beat the Heat:</u> This one-page poster from BC Housing offers simple tips to keep cool. (<u>Available in multiple languages!</u>)



<u>Health checks during extreme heat events:</u> This guide describes how to check in on neighbours, what to look out for, and when to seek help. (<u>Available in multiple languages!</u>)



<u>Fans in Extreme Heat FAQ:</u> Fans, if not used correctly, can actually make you hotter! This resource from Fraser Health explains how to use fans safely.



<u>Preparing for Extreme Heat Events</u> – <u>Low-Cost Solutions for Renters:</u> This guide offers low-cost ideas to keep your body and home cool during hot weather.



<u>Extreme Heat Preparedness Guide:</u> This guide helps you put together a heat preparedness plan, including information about how to sign up for heat alerts, steps to keep your home cool, and actions to take before, during, and after extreme heat events.



Extreme heat, human health, and common medications: An information page from Health Canada that identifies some of the higher-risk classes of medications to be aware of during heat events, and how to mitigate risks.



<u>Prepare an Extreme Heat Kit.</u> This handout from the BC Center for Disease Control offers ideas to put together an extreme heat emergency kit.

Step 4: Discuss Concerns

After reading some of the educational materials, discuss some of your biggest concerns about extreme heat.

Consider these questions:

- How concerned are you personally about extreme heat?
- Are you concerned for neighbours who might be at higher risk?
- Have you or someone you know had negative experiences in extreme heat?
- Would you feel comfortable sharing your specific health concerns or hearing those of a neighbour, so that you could more effectively and safely check in with each other during a heat event?

Step 5: Explore Opportunities for Action

Consider the possible options for action below – and of course feel free to come up with some of your own ideas for actions! Take some time to "brainstorm" about, and reflect on, each option before trying to make any final decisions. If you're discussing options together with neighbours, assign a note-taker to record the most important ideas and reflections and identify what "roles" different people would need to play to help make something happen. You might find it helpful to complete Building Resilient Neighbourhood's Prepare Together for Extreme Heat template (forthcoming).

Some options to consider...



Promote neighbour-to-neighbour learning

Host an educational talk, inviting a local expert to speak about extreme heat and safety planning, or **distribute heat-awareness materials** to neighbours.

Consider these questions:

- Is there a local emergency management agency, nonprofit, or health authority with speakers and/or educational materials available?
- Where could someone speak, and what equipment might be needed?
- How will we copy and distribute materials?
- Will we need any permissions to host a talk or distribute materials, such as from a building manager or strata council?
- Are there other types of educational activities that are possible?



Regular check-ins with neighbours can be life-saving during extreme heat events. Any neighbour-to-neighbour communication method, such as a buddy system, email list, online group, phone tree, door-hanger messaging system, or a lobby message board can be an effective way to check in on each other, share important health information, or match people's needs with offers for assistance among neighbours.

Consider these questions:

- What method could we use for checking on each other? Are there any existing communication channels we could use (e.g. Block Watch, strata lists, committees)? Is there anything that could "go wrong" with this method that we should be mindful of? (e.g. electricity failure during emergency)
- What sorts of public health or other information would be helpful to share during heat events, and how could we share them? (For example, signing up for a government alert system such as <u>WeatherCAN</u>.)
- If some neighbours need certain kinds of assistance during heat events, and other neighbours can offer such assistance, how can these people get connected?
- In any activities we choose, what roles would people need to take on?



TIP:

For more information and instructions, see the Building Resilient
Neighbourhoods guides
Build a Neighbour-toNeighbour
Communication System
(forthcoming), Build a
Buddy System
(forthcoming), and Be a
Buddy (forthcoming).



Find or create safe cooling zones

Identify safe cooling zones in the building or in the neighbourhood where people are able to go, such as shopping malls, libraries, basement spaces, or common rooms that can be cooled.

Consider these questions:

- Are there shady green spaces or air-conditioned public buildings or cooling centres nearby? Who is allowed to use them (e.g. pets), and how easy is it to get to them? Does your community have a map of cooling centres you can share with neighbours, including a list of hours, rules and available amenities for each?
- Does your home have a cool room or is there a common space that is cool, or that could be made cooler? (e.g. a portable air conditioner, window shades, seating, fans, water bottles)?
- Who lives on lower, cooler floors, or has a cool space, and might be willing to invite neighbours to their homes temporarily during a heat emergency? How can such opportunities be identified and communicated?
- Who could help others install shades (or blankets) in windows, or help do other simple temporary or permanent retrofits before or during extreme heat events? How can such opportunities be identified and communicated?



Does everyone have the supplies they need to stay cool during heat events, and could some supplies be better purchased together and distributed to neighbours? Review the suggestions in the Building Resilient Neighbourhoods Cool Kit Supplies List (forthcoming). Make it more fun by hosting a "cool kit party" and inviting neighbours to help assemble and distribute the kits!

Consider these questions:

- How will we purchase the supplies? Are there any local small grants available to help with this?
- How will we decide what items to get?
- How will we invite our neighbours to participate?
- How will we assemble and distribute the heat kits, and who can help hand them out?

Step 6: Take action and learn together!

Select one or two priority actions to try with your neighbours. After the next heat event, get together to debrief and learn about what actions worked well and what you might do differently next time to help keep each other safe.

Tell us what you think!

If you used this guide, please <u>take our survey!</u> Your response will help us improve this guide and other resources to help communities prepare together and build resilience.

Good luck and stay safe and cool!



This guide is part of Connect & Prepare and other programs from Building Resilient Neighbourhoods that help people who live close together to strengthen social connections and increase shared preparedness and collective resilience. Learn more at resilientneighbourhoods.ca



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