



Maryland Department of Health
Extreme Heat Emergency Plan
2024 Version 2.0

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Record of Changes

Date	Description	Draft Number
May 2021	Revised Draft Prepared	2021 Version 1.0
May 2021	Finalized Plan Distributed	Version 1.0
March/April 2022	Revised Draft Prepared	2022 Version 1.0
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April 2023	Revised Draft Prepared	2023 Version 1.0* *This plan will reset the version history and be noted as plan version 1.0; year 2024 will be 2024 Version 2.0*
January - June 2024	Revised Draft Prepared	2024 Version 2.0



Organizational Acronyms

AAA – Area Agencies on Aging

BHA – Behavioral Health Administration

DDA – Developmental Disabilities Administration

DHS – Department of Human Services

EMA – Emergency Management Agency

EMAC - Emergency Management Assistance Compact

EMS – Emergency Medical Services

ESSENCE – Electronic Surveillance System for the Early Notification of Community-based Epidemics

JIC – Joint Information Center

LHD – Local Health Department

MDoA – Maryland Department of Aging

MDH – Maryland Department of Health

MDEM – Maryland Department of Emergency Management

MJOC – Maryland Joint Operations Center

MIEMSS – Maryland Institute for Emergency Medical Services Systems

MTA – Maryland Transit Administration

NWS – National Weather Service

OCME – Office of the Chief Medical Examiner

OHCQ – Office of Health Care Quality

OP&R - Office of Preparedness & Response

PSC – Public Service Commission

SAL – State Activation Level

SCF – State Coordinating Function

SHA – State Highway Administration



Summary

Purpose

The Maryland Extreme Heat Emergency Plan, developed by the Maryland Department of Health (MDH), guides the state's actions during an Extreme Heat Event, as well as those of partner agencies and organizations, as defined below. This plan also provides guidance for the local health departments (LHDs) as they fulfill their roles; however, it does not mandate that LHDs perform the actions described. The Office of Preparedness & Response (OP&R) within MDH provides weekly heat reports on the [OP&R webpage](#) during each heat season.

LHD Actions

All actions listed for the LHDs in this plan are suggestions. Each local jurisdiction handles Extreme Heat Events differently. The recommendations included in this plan may not be applicable or practical for all LHDs or may be fulfilled by a different organization at the local level. Typically, the agency or organization that has a permit to host a public event can shut it down due to a weather emergency, including a Heat Advisory, Excessive Heat Warning/Watch, or Complex Heat Emergency. The health officer rarely shuts down events, but the local health department can provide targeted risk communication messaging to the public during Extreme Heat.

Disaster shelter managers should contact their local health officials for information specific to their locations as conditions vary from community to community.

Assumptions

Steady state operations subject to change with any order from the Governor.



Definitions

Complex Heat Emergency – A Complex Heat Emergency is a condition of an Extreme Heat Event with complications requiring additional response. Examples of such complications are water or power shortages or an extended heat wave.

Cooling Centers – The actual definition of a ‘cooling center’ may vary among local jurisdictions. For the purposes of this plan, a cooling center refers to a building identified by local authorities with air conditioning and water. A cooling center does not necessarily provide medical services. Cooling center plans may identify general locations, such as public libraries or malls, where the local government recommends going to escape the heat, or designating locations, such as community centers with extended hours and bottled water.

Excessive Heat Warning – According to the National Weather Service, an Excessive Heat Warning is issued within 12 hours of the onset of extremely dangerous heat conditions. The general rule of thumb for this Warning is when the maximum heat index temperature is expected to be 105°F or higher for at least 2 days and night time air temperatures will not drop below 75°F.

Excessive Heat Watch – According to the National Weather Service, Heat Watches are issued when conditions are favorable for an excessive heat event in the next 24 to 72 hours. A Watch is used when the risk of a heat wave has increased but its occurrence and timing is still uncertain.

Heat Advisory – According to the National Weather Service, a Heat Advisory is issued within 12 hours of the onset of extremely dangerous heat conditions. The general rule of thumb for this Advisory is when the maximum heat index temperature is expected to be 100°F or higher for at least 2 days, and night time air temperatures will not drop below 75°F. Take precautions to avoid heat illness. If you don't take precautions, you may become seriously ill or even die.

Extreme Heat Event – An Extreme Heat Event is a weather condition with excessive heat and/or humidity that has the potential to cause heat-related illnesses. An Extreme Heat Event is defined as a day or series of days when:

- NWS has issued a Heat Advisory or Excessive Heat Warning.
- Weather or environmental conditions are such that a high incidence of heat-related illnesses can reasonably be expected.

Heat Index – The heat index is a measure of what the temperature actually feels like. The heat index is a combination of both the actual temperature and relative humidity. It is the best indicator for a pending Extreme Heat Event. The heat index is the key indicator of an Extreme Heat Event by the NWS.¹

¹<https://www.weather.gov/safety/heat>



Heat-Related Illness – Heat-Related Illness is a condition caused by Extreme Heat, usually dehydration, heat exhaustion, heat stroke, or a medical condition exacerbated by heat events.

- *Heat Cramps* – Painful muscle spasms in the abdomen, arms, or legs following strenuous activity and typically caused by a loss of fluids and electrolytes in the body; the skin is usually moist and cool, and the pulse is normal or slightly raised; body temperature is mostly normal.
- *Heat Exhaustion* – A condition characterized by fainting, rapid pulse, nausea, profuse sweating, cool skin, and collapse, caused by prolonged exposure to heat accompanied by the loss of adequate fluid and electrolytes from the body as a result of sweating.
- *Heat Stroke* – A severe condition caused by impairment of the body’s temperature-regulating abilities, resulting from prolonged exposure to excessive heat and characterized by cessation of sweating, severe headache, high fever, hot dry skin, and in serious cases, collapse or coma that can cause death or permanent disability if emergency treatment is not provided.

High-Risk Groups – High-risk groups are populations disproportionately affected by Extreme Heat Events. These groups include children, youth athletes, the homeless, individuals who may be socially isolated (such as the elderly or those with psychiatric illness), and individuals with medical risk factors, such as alcoholism, cardiovascular or pulmonary disease, hypertension, diabetes, or tobacco use.

Phase 1: Pre-Heat Season

Triggers

- Preheat season activities begin in May.

Surveillance

- The NWS determines the potential heat impact in the forecast and the Maryland Department of Emergency Management (MDEM) monitors data from the Sterling, Pittsburgh, Mt. Holly, and Wakefield NWS stations.
- MDH conducts daily analysis of syndromic surveillance data from emergency departments for indications of an increase in heat-related illness.

MDH Actions

- MDH will conduct an annual review of the MDH Heat Emergency Plan and Extreme Heat Checklists and revise/update as necessary.
- MDH will provide guidance and recommend best practices to aid jurisdictions in revising local Heat Emergency Plans as requested.
- MDH will update the MDH website with links to LHD information.
- MDH will send the plan to state and local partners for review.
- MDH will distribute the revised Heat Emergency Plan to LHDs and other partners.



- MDH will update the Fact Sheets and Resources listed on the MDH website.

LHD Actions

- LHDs will conduct an annual review of the jurisdiction's plan.
- LHDs will coordinate with local Emergency Management Agencies (EMAs) to identify and renew expectations of local partners regarding operations, activities, and actions during an Extreme Heat Event.
- LHDs will engage school systems to review and set guidelines for conducting and canceling outdoor activities, including field trips.
- LHDs will coordinate with EMAs to begin actively tracking large public events that could have severe public health consequences in an Extreme Heat Event.
- LHDs will work with local agencies to ensure heat safety warnings are included with all summer event permits.
- LHDs may coordinate with other local agencies, such as the local Area Agencies on Aging (AAA) and Departments of Social Services (DSS), to compile lists of individuals and facilities vulnerable to heat-related health issues.

Public Information

- MDH and LHDs will review/revise written and electronic public information materials and distribute as appropriate.

Phase 2: Pre-Event

Triggers

- MDH and jurisdictions will issue a press release by the first week of June reminding Marylanders of ways to stay safe in extreme heat. This will include social media posts that link to the [Extreme Heat Resources page](#) and other resources. This information will be released a second time upon notice of an Extreme Heat Event or the first heat-related death.

Surveillance

- MDH and LHDs will monitor weather forecasts for the possibility of predicted weather conditions consistent with Extreme Heat.
- MDH will distribute weekly reports with an analysis of the public health impact of heat-related illnesses occurring in Maryland. The weekly reports will be made available to the public on a predetermined day every week. These reports will include, but may not be limited to:
 - Temperature and humidity data via the NWS:
 - Baltimore City is used as the location to record the temperature and humidity.
 - Emergency Department visits for heat-related illness through MDH's syndromic surveillance system.



- Heat-related death data reported by the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner (OCME).
- Emergency Medical Services (EMS) data reported by the Maryland Institute for Emergency Medical Services Systems (MIEMSS).
- MDEM will coordinate with local EMAs to monitor large public events to help prevent or mitigate potential mass casualty incidents.
- MDEM will maintain situational awareness on power outages in the state.
- MIEMSS will monitor EMS systems statewide.

MDH Actions

- MDH will issue a press release by the end of the first week in June or just prior to the day of the first Extreme Heat Event.
- MDH will issue a press release to announce the first heat-related death of the season. This will also include information on how to prevent heat-related illnesses.
- MDH will review and revise this plan following any Extreme Heat Events as necessary.
- MDH will review and revise public education materials on the MDH website.
- MDH will contact nursing homes to promote summer preparedness, reminding them to check their generators and air conditioning systems and to report real or potential concerns and issues.
- MDH will update the MDH website with current LHD information.

LHD Actions

- LHDs will identify local cooling centers and post the location on their county's website.²
- LHDs may monitor the NWS for local temperature and relative humidity data.
- LHDs may review planning activities and maintain situational awareness.

Demobilization

- MDH will proceed to Phase 6 of this plan in mid-September, unless public health experts recommend a different demobilization date based on extenuating circumstances.

Phase 3: Extreme Heat Event – Heat Advisory

Triggers

- NWS has issued a Heat Advisory.
- Heat indexes meeting the criteria for a Heat Advisory are likely within the next 12 to 48 hours.

Surveillance

- MDH will maintain situational awareness on vulnerable public health and medical facilities.
- MDH will continue to monitor syndromic surveillance systems and issue the weekly report outlined in Phase 2.

² <https://preparedness.health.maryland.gov/Documents/CoolingCenter.pdf>



- MDH and MDEM will continue to monitor NWS forecasts for any indication of Extreme Heat.
- MDEM will continue to monitor power outages and inform/notify MDH of issues.

MDH Actions

- MDH will notify the jurisdictions expected to be impacted by the Extreme Heat Event:
 - The MDH advisory will also be sent to other state agencies.
 - MDH may alert the public via media outlets, websites, and social media.
- MDH will review Extreme Heat checklists and begin taking appropriate actions.
- MDH will coordinate with MIEMSS and the Maryland Joint Operation Center (MJOC) to issue alerts when appropriate.
- MDH will coordinate with MDEM to maintain situational awareness and gauge the potential impact of the anticipated event.

LHD Actions

- LHDs will report information regarding local facilities in crisis to MDH.
- LHDs will coordinate with their local EMA to notify local Extreme Heat planning partners, including DSS, AAA, and local jurisdiction fire and EMS agencies.
- LHDs will consider activating any local cooling center plans (or will coordinate with the local agency responsible for activating local cooling center plans) and notify MDH with a press release or URL to the facility locations; EMAs should notify MDEM of these locations.
- LHDs will consider activating any applicable transportation assistance programs for vulnerable populations to be transported to cooling centers (or coordinate with the local agency responsible for local transportation to cooling centers).
- LHDs will coordinate with EMAs to recommend heightening mitigation protections or to discourage outdoor public events.
- LHDs may review plans for extra staffing and emergency support services and consider staging potential resources.
- LHDs may coordinate with relevant organizations to provide outreach to vulnerable populations.
- LHDs may coordinate with existing volunteers and partners to respond to Extreme Heat.
- LHDs may coordinate public messaging with public access numbers such as non-emergency dispatch, 211, 311, or reverse 911 systems.

Public Information

- MDH will coordinate with each jurisdiction on Extreme Heat Event communications.
- LHDs may consider providing all locally used call centers (911, 211, hospital, and private 'Ask a Nurse' lines) information for cooling centers and transportation options.
- MDH and LHDs will employ consistent messaging that urges individuals to check on elderly neighbors and family members.



- MDH and LHDs will include pet emergency preparedness for heat-related illness prevention in messaging, including resources found at Ready.gov³ and Animals.⁴
- Jurisdictions may utilize existing signage (such as outside firehouses, public buildings, or public buses) to display concise heat safety tips.

Demobilization

- MDH will revert to Phase 2 when the Heat Advisory has expired.

Phase 4: Extreme Heat Event – Excessive Heat Warning

Triggers

- The NWS has issued an Excessive Heat Warning.
- Heat indexes meeting the criteria for an Excessive Heat Warning are likely within the next 12 to 48 hours.
- Heat indexes meeting the criteria for a Heat Advisory are expected to continue for three or more days.

MDH Actions

MDH will take all the actions outlined in Phase 3: Extreme Heat Event–Heat Advisory and those noted below.

- MDH will engage 211MD as a public access number for heat-related questions and provide 211MD with up-to-date public messaging materials.
- MDH will conduct conference calls to discuss the potential impact of the event with stakeholders, including, but not limited to:
 - Internal MDH staff
 - LHD staff
 - The Joint Operations Group
- MDH will coordinate with MDEM in preparation for a potential Complex Heat Emergency.
- MDH will supply LHDs with updated lists of licensed healthcare facilities for tracking.
- MDH will recommend that the Maryland Department of Human Services (DHS) and the Maryland Department of Aging (MDoA) update and monitor any lists of vulnerable nonmedical facilities, such as assisted living facilities.

LHD Actions

- LHDs may provide MDH with updated information for local cooling centers.

Demobilization

- MDH will revert to Phase 2 when all heat-related advisories have expired.

³<https://www.ready.gov/heat>

⁴<https://www.ready.gov/animals>



Phase 5: Complex Heat Emergency

Triggers

- MDH and MDEM will decide what conditions constitute a Complex Heat Emergency, which may include, but are not limited to:
 - Significant power or water outages.
 - Extended heat waves lasting more than three days.
 - Any other factors that would exacerbate a Heat Emergency.
 - MDEM will escalate the State Activation Level (SAL) as appropriate to facilitate interagency coordination.

Surveillance

- MDH will begin issuing the Daily Heat-Related Illness Surveillance Report through the duration of the emergency at the discretion of the Deputy Secretary for Public Health Services
 - The final Daily Report will be issued the day following the final Heat Advisory day, with surveillance data from the final Extreme Heat day.
 - The disbursement of death data will follow the prescribed flow of information due to the overwhelming number of requests for information during these events:
 - OCME death data will be routed internally to the MDH Office of Preparedness and Response.
 - Local health officers or their designee(s) will be notified of the details of deaths occurring in their jurisdiction by MDH.
 - The Daily Report, which will include the jurisdiction where the death occurred, age group and gender of the decedent, will be sent to planning partners and posted to the MDH website. Details of death will not be included in the public report.

MDH Actions

MDH will take all the actions outlined in Phase 4: Extreme Heat Event–Excessive Heat Warning as applicable, and those noted below.

- MDH will conduct regular conference calls to discuss the potential impact of the event with stakeholders, including, but are not limited to:
 - Internal MDH staff
 - LHD staff
 - Joint Operations Group
- MDH will coordinate with MDEM, DHS, MDoA, and MDH units including the Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA), the Behavioral Health Administration (BHA), LHDs, Office of Health Care Quality (OHCQ), and other organizations as necessary to determine if facilities with vulnerable populations need additional assistance.
- MDH will recommend that MDEM request information from local EMAs on public events that may be affected by the Complex Heat Emergency.
- MDH will coordinate with MDEM to activate widespread power outage plans as necessary.



- MDH will recommend that MDEM coordinate State Coordination Functions (SCFs) to support the response according to their established protocols.
- MDH will recommend that MDEM and local EMAs coordinate with local emergency services to report any healthcare facilities encountered with excessively hot interiors that may pose a danger to residents.

LHD Actions

- LHDs may notify EMAs of any large-scale public events known to the LHD that have the potential to result in a mass casualty incident.
- LHDs may consider the applicability of requiring greater mitigation measures for outdoor public events.
- Jurisdictions may expand cooling center capacity as necessary.

Water Shortages

- In the event of a widespread and/or prolonged water shortage, local jurisdictions should consider providing alternative potable water to affected residents or request resources through local EMAs or through the Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC) if there is a local declaration.
- Local jurisdictions may consider requesting assistance from the private sector in providing and distributing water.

Power Outages

- In the event of a widespread and/or prolonged power outage, MDH will coordinate with MDEM, the Public Service Commission, and appropriate power companies to monitor power loss in vulnerable public health and medical facilities.
- The Maryland Insurance Administration may consider waivers to pharmacy restrictions regarding prescription refills.

Public Information

- MDEM may activate a Joint Information Center (JIC) to address public messaging.
- MDEM and MDH, through the JIC (if activated), will use 211 or public access numbers to distribute Heat Emergency information.
- Local jurisdictions, the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA), and the State Highway Administration (SHA) will utilize existing digital signage (such as outside firehouses, public buildings, or public buses) to display concise heat safety tips.

Demobilization

- MDH will revert to a previous phase once the complicating factors have been resolved as described below:
 - MDH will revert to Phase 5 if an Excessive Heat Warning is in effect.
 - MDH will revert to Phase 4 if a Heat Advisory is in effect.
 - MDH will revert to Phase 2 if all advisories have expired.



- MDEM will lower the SAL as appropriate.

Phase 6: Post-Summer

The post-heat season activities typically begin in mid-September and include an End of Year (EOY) report.

Triggers

- Post-summer activities begin in September, unless public health experts recommend a different demobilization date based on extenuating circumstances.

MDH Actions

- MDH will cease circulation of weekly heat reports in September, unless public health experts recommend a different demobilization date based on extenuating circumstances.
- MDH will collect After Action Reports from affected local jurisdictions and determine best practices to be included in the following year's planning efforts.
- MDH will collect and analyze statewide surveillance data from the summer and release a surveillance summary report for use in future heat planning.
- MDH will review and update the Extreme Heat Plan, including a comprehensive review of local plans and resources, to be completed and posted by May 1, unless there are extenuating circumstances, such as a public health emergency.

LHD Actions

- LHDs may cease heat-event monitoring and return cooling centers to normal hours as appropriate.
- LHDs will coordinate with MDH on an annual heat plan review.
- LHDs will identify organizations serving high-risk populations to be partnered within the following season.
- LHDs may develop or revise information for high-risk individuals.
- LHDs may coordinate with local partners to identify lists of individuals and facilities considered vulnerable during a Heat Emergency.
- LHDs will conduct an evaluation of interventions and review evaluation tools to monitor effectiveness:
 - Cooling center usage.
 - Transportation program usage, if available.