



EXTREME HEAT PLAYBOOK
FOR
CHIEF AND COUNCIL

Version: October 2023

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HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

The extreme heat playbook was created to help guide Chief and Council during an extreme heat weather event. This playbook includes the following Chief-and-council-specific information:



Chief and Council Emergency Checklists



Community Spokesperson Emergency Checklists



Extreme Heat Roles and Responsibilities



Extreme Heat Background Information

This document is not intended to replace the complete Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc Extreme Heat Plan or operate as a stand-alone resource. It also assumes all EOC related support activities are being managed as appropriate within the context of the Tk'emlúps Emergency Management Plan.

1.0 CHIEF AND COUNCIL EXTREME HEAT CHECKLIST

CHIEF AND COUNCIL HEAT WARNING AND EXTREME EMERGENCY HEAT CHECKLIST

- **Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC)** is the federal ministry responsible for issuing heat warnings, extreme heat emergencies, and de-escalation alerts when criteria levels are met
- The **Ministry of Emergency Management and Climate Readiness (EMCR)** is the lead coordinating agency for provincial government support to community response to the non-health related impacts of extreme heat events
- The **Ministry of Health** is the lead provincial response agency for the public health impacts of an extreme heat event

Gather Situational Awareness:

- Confirm with the Corporate Executives and/or the Emergency Planning Coordinator (EPC) there is a heat event potentially impacting the community
- Gather information on the region(s) under potential threat via the [ECCC weather alerts website](#) or through the [WeatherCAN app](#)

Confirm with the CAO:

- Whether or not the EOC needs to be activated. If yes:
 - To what extent
 - If an EMCR task number has been requested
 - If a local community partner coordination call is required
 - If there any potential impacts to the Tk'emlúps continuity of operations
 - If so, discuss activating the Tk'emlúps Business Continuity Plan
 - Any known or potential competing issues
 - What are the community extreme heat response strategies that will be activated

Review the following with the Corporate Executives and the EPC:

- Internal communication protocols to staff
- External communication protocols to supporting community partners
- External communication protocols to the general public
- External communication protocols to media; traditional and social

Confirm with Corporate Executives and/or EPC and/or Public Information Officer (PIO):

- Who will be the primary Community Spokesperson
 - Ensure this person will not be viewed as fatigued, stressed or combative as this may affect public perceptions on the local authority and their ability to deal with the event

2.0 COMMUNITY SPOKESPERSON EXTREME HEAT CHECKLIST

COMMUNITY SPOKESPERSON HEAT WARNING AND EXTREME HEAT EMERGENCY CHECKLIST

- Prior to any interviews receive a briefing from the EOC Director and/or EPC and confirm:
 - Known and potential impacts; ensure only factual information is released to public
 - What community leadership and the EOC are doing to support the event
 - Instructions required to give the general public:
 - Identify geographic areas under the heat warning or extreme heat emergency
 - Location of cool public facilities and/or designated cooling centres
 - Where they can go to get more information including the Voyent Alert, online sources, community sign locations
 - When the next public update will be, and how it will be delivered
 - Basic personal preparedness or safety tips
 - Any other messaging that is appropriate
- Identify any information that is confidential and/or sensitive to any official investigations surrounding the event and ensure it does not get released
- Ensure all staff, EOC personnel and responders know that all media inquiries are to be directed to the EOC Information Officer for follow up
- To better prepare yourself for the interview(s), confirm:
 - Which traditional media will be attending the interview and what social media platforms are being used officially by the EOC or community leadership
 - Ask the interviewer(s) ahead of time:
 - What their questions will be and what their intended storyline is
 - When and how it will be broadcast
- During the interview(s):
 - Follow the "CAC" principle: *Concern, Action, Commitment*
 - Ensure messaging conveys empathy, addresses what is being done to respond to the situation and expresses that all efforts are focused on supporting those affected
 - Only speak to factual information that has been approved by the EOC Director (this is especially critical in situations that involve injuries or fatalities or if property has been damaged or destroyed)
 - Where questions are asked and you cannot answer, avoid the phrase "No comment" and instead, refer them to a subject matter expert if one is available or use one of the following responses:
 - "I'm not the best person to address that, but I will connect you with someone who can."
 - "We're not yet at a stage where we have that information. When we do, we will share it."
 - "At this time, we are focussed on responding to the situation at hand. Once things have stabilized, I would be happy to get you some information on that."
 - Remain calm and confident in order to reassure the impacted public
- A primary consideration is to set the tone and expectation for the public by striking a balance between providing awareness and not causing unnecessary panic
- Avoid jargon – plain language should be utilized whenever possible
- Understand that you may become the "face" of the emergency and will likely remain so through the recovery process. This may be taxing on you and your loved ones, especially if local authority actions come under scrutiny or criticism
- Incorporate self-care and manage fatigue to avoid coming across as tired, stressed, or combative. Otherwise, public perception on Community leadership and their ability to deal with the event may be negatively impacted

3.0 EXTREME HEAT ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

POSITION	ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES
Policy Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supports the community extreme heat emergency plan and ensures it is current and relevant to the community needs
Chief and Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsible for supporting extreme heat risk mitigation, preparedness, and response for their community • Responsible for knowing and understanding community extreme heat key messaging to help inform constituents • Not involved in EOC operations
Corporate Executive(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ultimately responsible for ensuring there is a community plan for EHEs in place • Communicates extreme heat situational awareness to Chief and council as well as other departments as necessary • Ensures business continuity planning is in place
Emergency Planning Coordinator (EPC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourages staff and community partners to develop and implement heat response strategies • Reviews, socializes, and maintains the extreme heat plan • Ensures extreme heat is considered and integrated into existing emergency response plans • Identifies and requests the support from various agencies that can provide assistance • Engages local partners and community partners in heat response planning
Emergency Operations Centre (EOC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gathers situational awareness (e.g., monitors local weather conditions and heat-health vulnerabilities) • Encourages community partners to activate their heat response plans and conduct outreach to members within their organizational mandate • Connects local partners • Activates heat risk reduction strategies as needed • Disseminates updates and key messaging to Band staff, community partners, and community members/public • May not always require activation or full activation and may be dependent on incident-specific conditions

4.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Climate projection models predict the average number of hot days (+30 °C) will increase if current greenhouse gas emission rates continue. These events can become particularly dangerous when they last an extended period of time or occur early in the season when people are not acclimatized to the heat.

In June 2021, British Columbia experienced a “heat dome” weather event; a type of extreme heat event (EHE) that resulted in unprecedented high temperatures. Records were broken across BC and in some areas, temperatures soared as much as 20 °C above seasonal norms. High overnight temperatures and the early summer timing made it even more challenging for residents to adapt to the extreme heat. While the EHE lasted only one week, a total of 619 deaths were reported by the BC Coroners Service. This event is now the deadliest extreme heat event recorded in Canada, followed by 280 deaths in Quebec in 2010 and 156 deaths in BC in 2009.

In the weeks following the heat dome event, the BC Chief Coroner assembled a multi-disciplinary panel of experts to review the 619 deaths with the purpose of preventing a similar tragedy from occurring again. Findings from the 2021 extreme heat panel review concluded most of the heat-related deaths took place indoors and decedents were 65 years of age or older, lived alone, lived in urban areas without adequate cooling resources, or had chronic health conditions such as physical or cognitive challenges, hypertension, schizophrenia, depression, and substance use disorders. (BC Coroners Report, 2022, p.5).

1.1 BC HEAT ALERT SYSTEM (HARS)

A BC heat alert system (HARS) was developed and implemented in 2022 following the BC Coroner inquest into the 619 heat-related deaths. The BC HARS uses a two-level alert system for warning the public of extreme heat events (EHEs). This system incorporates the Environment Canada and Climate Change (ECCC) pre-existing heat warning system as well as newly developed extreme heat emergency criteria. The purpose of the extreme heat emergency alert is to increase public awareness of the heightened health risks associated with consecutive days of rising temperatures. (BC HEAT committee, 2022).

$$\text{BC HARS} = \text{ECCC Heat Warning System} + \text{Extreme Heat Emergency Criteria (new)}$$

2 Level Alert System

The ECCC heat warning system uses region specific temperature alerting criteria. BC is divided into five heat alert warning regions. It is important to note these regions do not necessarily coincide with health authority boundaries. Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc is located in the Southeast geographic heat region and falls within the Interior Health Authority region as show in Figure 1-1.

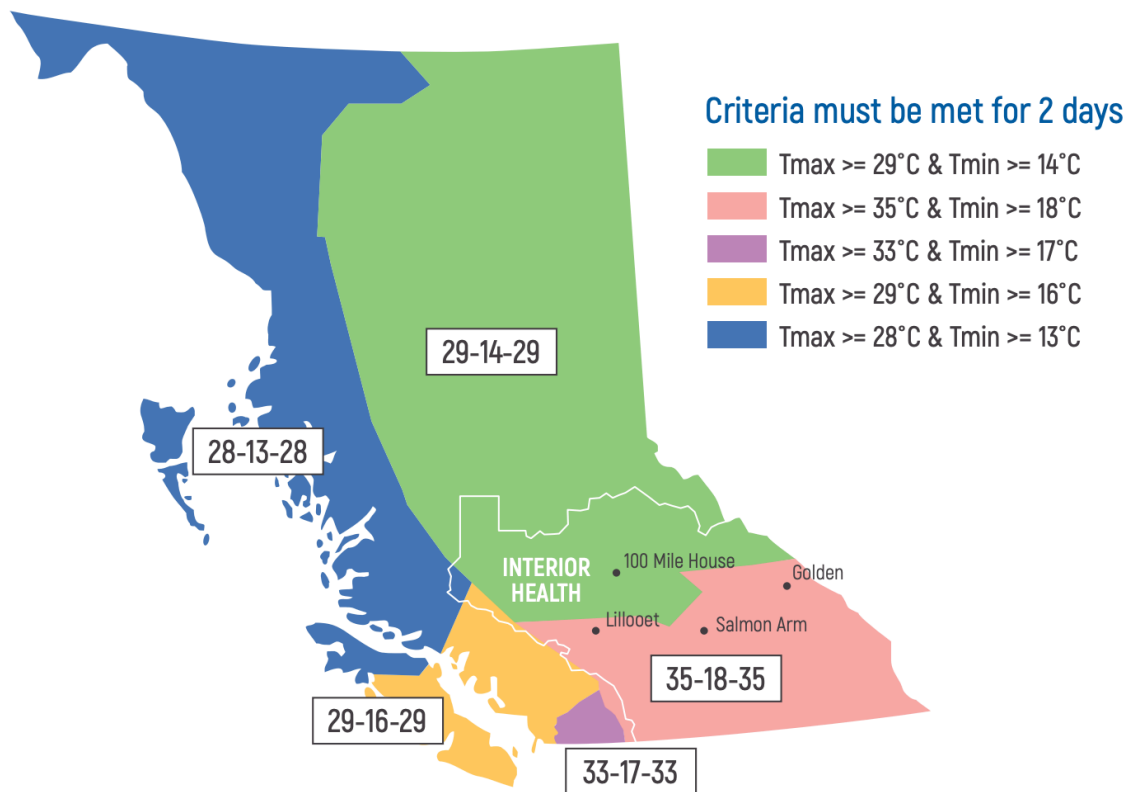


Figure 0-1 Map of the ECCC Heat Alert Warning Regions and Regional Health Authority Boundaries
Source: BC HARS 2022

1.1.1 Level 1 Heat Warning



LEVEL 1 HEAT WARNING

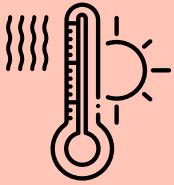
≥2 days in which forecasted daytime maximum temperatures are ≥35°C **AND** overnight minimum temperature are ≥18°C

- A Moderate risk to public health (5% increase in mortality)
- Can expect approximately 1 – 3 events per summer season

ECCC will issue a heat warning when daytime and overnight temperatures are higher than usual, but are NOT getting hotter every day. ECCC defines a heat warning as two or more consecutive days in which daytime maximum temperatures reach or exceed 35 °C AND overnight minimum temperatures do not drop below 18 °C. If deemed necessary, Tk'emlúps may choose to:

- » Activate their EOC to monitor the weather forecast
- » Activate the heat warning communications
- » Prepare for an extreme heat event if necessary
- » Encourage people to take the usual steps to stay cool

1.1.2 Level 2 Extreme Heat Emergency



Level 2 EXTREME HEAT EMERGENCY

Heat warning criteria has been met (see above) **AND** forecast indicates that daily highs will substantially increase day over day for ≥ 2 days

- A **Very High** risk to public health ($\geq 20\%$ increase in mortality)
- Can expect approximately 1 – 2 events per decade

An extreme heat emergency is when daytime and overnight temperatures are well above seasonal norms AND are getting hotter every day. ECCC defines an extreme heat emergency when heat warning criteria has been met and the forecast indicates a substantial increase in daily highs for more than two consecutive days.

Tk'emlúps may choose to:

- » Activate their EOC to engage in extreme heat response activities
- » Activate their extreme heat emergency communications
- » Encourage people to check on their heat buddy

1.2 KNOWN VULNERABLE POPULATIONS

Vulnerable populations are disproportionately impacted by EHEs and a disruption to the support services they rely on can put them at even greater risk.

VULNERABLE CATEGORY	FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO VULNERABILITY	EXAMPLES
Age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physiological characteristics (e.g., less able to thermoregulate) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seniors aged 65 years or older • Infants and young children
Housing / Living Arrangements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited or no access to cooling resources • People living alone may not be able to recognize when they are overheating 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People experiencing homelessness • People who do not have access to adequate housing • People without access to air conditioning • People who live alone or are socially isolated • People who depend on a caregiver
Health Vulnerabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certain medications can interfere with body's ability to cool itself • Inability to recognize overheating and/or protect oneself from overheating • Certain health conditions may reduce the body's ability to adapt to heat 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People who are pregnant • People with mental illness (e.g., schizophrenia, depression, anxiety) • People with chronic health conditions (e.g., diabetes, heart disease, or respiratory disease) • People with communication, sensory, and cognitive impairment • People who take certain medications (e.g., some antidepressants, antihistamines, some blood pressure medicines, some sedative medicines, and

		thyroid medicine)* • People who drink alcohol or take illegal drugs (e.g., methamphetamines amphetamines, cocaine, heroin, PCP (phencyclidine hydrochloride), and LSD (lysergic acid diethylamide)**
Accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited or no knowledge of cooling resources and services available Limited or no ability to access cooling resources and services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> People experiencing literacy barriers People experiencing language barriers People experiencing systemic barriers People experiencing mobility challenges People without vehicles
Occupation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Higher exposure to heat risks Increased physical strain 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> People who work in hot environments (e.g., kitchens or outdoors)
Personal Behavior	Lower perception of heat risk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> People who exercise or are physically active in the heat
Socioeconomic Disparity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduced access to cooling resources and services Limited financial resources to take adequate protective measures Limited access to health care and social services Higher rates of social isolation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> People with a low income People with few to no social connections
Cultural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited local knowledge Cultural differences Language and literacy barriers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> People who are new to Canada People who have recently moved to the area or are visiting

Sources: Health Canada, 2011 and BC HARS, 2022

* For a list of some medications that increase health risks from extreme heat see the [Government of Canada Acute Care During Extreme Heat pdf](#), call HealthLink BC at 8-1-1 to speak with a registered nurse, and/or contact your physician

** Certain substances such as amphetamines or cocaine can create hyperthermic responses in the body under normal conditions and can increase the risk of heat related illnesses