

The Elements of an Effective Municipal Heat Relief Website

Introduction

As extreme heat becomes more frequent, more severe, and longer lasting, we need to design public information and communication systems that effectively reach priority populations before, during, and after heat events.

The **Lower Mystic Cool Communications to Build Regional Heat Resiliency Project** found that residents, community-based organizations, and institutions rely on municipal websites as trusted sources of information. Through this project, MAPC conducted a comprehensive scan of municipal and county extreme heat websites, identifying six key elements essential to an effective online, heat relief resource hub:

1. Heat & Health Tips
2. Local Heat Relief Resources
3. Extreme Heat Projects
4. Municipal Contact Information
5. Alert Systems Sign Up
6. Translated & Accessible Information

How to Use this Guide:

Developing a centralized hub for heat relief resources makes it easier for residents and service providers to locate critical information. This document provides municipalities with practical recommendations and best practices for creating or strengthening their heat relief resources websites to maximize the effectiveness of the information presented.

This guide is organized around six key elements essential to an effective municipal website on extreme heat. For each key element, you will find:

1. An explanation of the element and why it's important
2. Specific recommendations for what to include
3. Real-world examples from other municipalities that effectively implement these practices

Use these examples as inspiration for developing or enhancing your own heat resources website, adapting the approaches to fit your community's specific needs and context.

What do we suggest including on your heat resources website?

Our scan of municipal and county extreme heat websites from across the country identified six key elements to an effective municipal website on extreme heat:

1. Heat & Health Tips

Include signs & symptoms of a heat stroke. Many individuals don't recognize the serious threat heat poses to their health. It's crucial to clearly outline the spectrum of heat-related conditions—from heat exhaustion to heat stroke—and provide community members with the information they need to identify when they or their loved ones may be experiencing these potentially dangerous conditions. Include actionable guidance on when to seek medical attention. You can create custom graphics or utilize existing resources from trusted sources.

The infographic is split into two columns: Heat Exhaustion (orange background) and Heat Stroke (red background). In the center is a stylized human figure with a question mark above its head, indicating symptoms. To the left of the figure are symptoms for Heat Exhaustion: Dizziness, Thirst, Heavy Sweating, Nausea, and Weakness. To the right are symptoms for Heat Stroke: Confusion, Dizziness, and Becomes Unconscious. Below the figure is a water bottle icon. On the far left, under 'ACT FAST', are three bullet points: 'Move to a cooler area', 'Loosen clothing', and 'Sip cool water'. A note below says 'Seek medical help if symptoms don't improve'. On the far right, under 'ACT FAST', is a large 'CALL 911' in red, followed by three bullet points: 'Move person to a cooler area', 'Loosen clothing and remove extra layers', and 'Cool with water or ice'. At the bottom left, it says 'Heat exhaustion can lead to heat stroke.' At the bottom right, it says 'Heat stroke can cause death or permanent disability if emergency treatment is not given.' Logos for NOAA, CDC, NIOSH, and NCEM are at the bottom left, and a 'STAY COOL' logo is at the bottom right. The text 'Stay Cool, Stay Hydrated, Stay Informed!' is centered at the bottom.

This National Weather Service and Centers for Disease Control infographic clearly illustrates the warning signs of heat-related illness, from mild symptoms to life-threatening conditions. The graphic is publicly available for reuse on municipal websites. [source: www.weather.gov/images/wrn/Infographics/2022/heat-symptoms-2022-final.png](http://www.weather.gov/images/wrn/Infographics/2022/heat-symptoms-2022-final.png)

How individuals can protect themselves. Many individuals may not be aware of how to protect themselves and others in the midst of a heat emergency. Providing recommendations that are relevant to your local community can help individuals feel empowered. If your city or town includes many homes without air conditioning, this could include tips on how to make their home a protective place through shades and window fans, while noting the limitations of these items. If your community includes many older adults, you could emphasize the importance of hydration and highlight programming at the senior center. Developing a simple checklist or toolkit that suggests important resources to have handy and precautions to take can support residents in taking these steps. Sharing this information in simple language, multiple languages when possible, and in a visually engaging way can help individuals not feel overwhelmed. The [MEMA Extreme Heat Safety Tips](#) and [DPH Climate & Resources](#) page can be tailored to address your local needs. Provide links to these state resources for those who would like further information.

YOUR 4 STEPS TO PREPAREDNESS

Are you prepared for emergencies or disasters that may impact your community? Now's the time to get ready, so that you and your loved ones will know what to do. Follow these four steps to prepare yourself, your family, your neighborhood and community.



1. HAVE A PLAN



2. KEEP SUPPLIES



3. STAY INFORMED



4. GET INVOLVED

Los Angeles County's emergency preparedness website offers four steps that residents can take to safeguard their health and protect their communities. Each step includes further resources, quick tips, and videos for individuals to interact with.

3. WHAT YOU CAN DO

BEFORE

- Sign up for emergency alerts
- Check your thermostat to confirm livable condition
- Close curtains during the day
- Introduce yourself to neighbors
- Install a window A/C and fans
- Keep your phone charged
- Renters: Identify who to call if A/C equipment fails
-

DURING

- Call 911 if you feel you are at risk
- Stay hydrated
- Visit a cooling center or public facility
- Check on neighbors
- Use fans for cross ventilation and open windows at night
- Visit a splash pad
- Avoid exercising outdoors
-

AFTER

- Review Extreme Weather Toolkit for more permanent solutions
- Assess moisture and mold in building
- Notify property management of damage
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-
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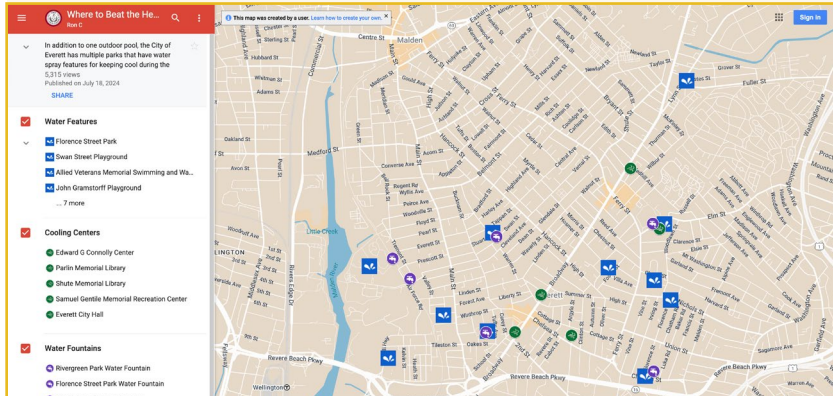
*Fill out blank spaces with actions specific to you

The City of Cambridge provides a checklist for residents to take action to prepare themselves for an extreme heat event, including ways to protect their home and family. The document provides links to local resources residents can utilize.

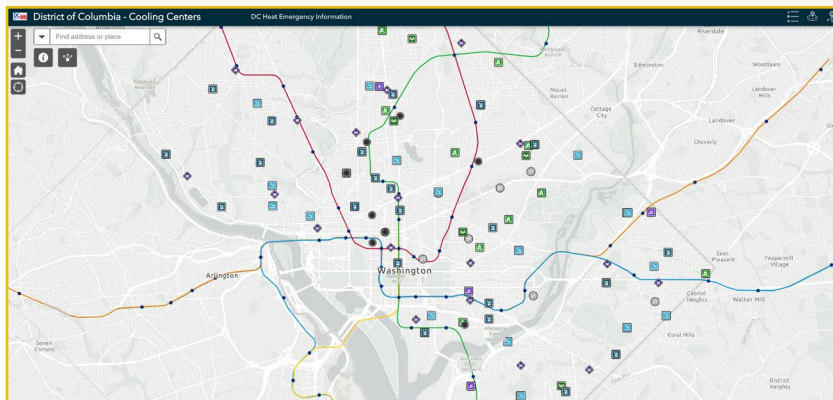
Malden has an extensive list of [*tips for extreme heat*](#) regarding how to stay cool in your home.

2. Local Health Relief Resources

Create a comprehensive list of community resources. Identifying community-based resources can help individuals obtain the necessary tools to protect themselves during heat emergencies. Including a map that highlights the location of heat relief resources — cooling locations, parks, splashpads, community centers, places to refill water bottles — helps promote awareness of these resources and enhance utilization. Including the address, hours of operation, and nearby public transit lines can ensure accessibility of these resources.



Everett's heat relief resources website includes an *interactive map* of resources around the city to help keep residents cool. The map depicts water sites, cooling centers, and water fountains that residents can find on the map with their address and pictures.



DC's cooling center map portrays available cooling centers around the city that residents can seek during a heat emergency. The cooling centers include community centers, spray parks, low-barrier shelters, senior wellness centers, and other services. Every pin shows the address, operation hours, and phone number of each resource. The regional metro lines are highlighted throughout the map with each station pinpointed.

Include resources for home weatherization and cooling modifications.

Helping residents access programs for weatherization, insulation, window upgrades, and cooling system installations creates long-term protection against extreme heat. These permanent home modifications provide more sustainable solutions than temporary cooling measures. Providing information about statewide programs like Mass Save and [LIHEAP](#)¹ can help individuals protect their health while potentially reducing utility burden and overall energy costs. Including local resources that residents can utilize can help promote awareness of these services and help individuals feel empowered to safeguard their health

1. In the midst of federal cuts, it's important to double check statewide programs to ensure they're still active before including them on your heat resource website.

Everett is participating in the [Community First Partnership](#), sponsored by Mass Save, to provide cost-saving energy efficiency solutions to residents and small businesses. When including examples like this one on a heat resource website, linking these sustainable resources helps individuals engage in protecting their homes and health.

3. Supporting Local Heat Projects

Increasing awareness of local heat projects. Connecting individuals to existing local heat projects can help raise awareness of the important work these initiatives are striving to achieve. This can also help inform individuals of what their municipality is doing to mitigate heat emergencies and promote possible opportunities for them to engage with the projects. You can include links to project websites, share progress updates, and invite community members, when possible, to support projects.

Project	Status	Funding Type	Role	Geographic Extent	Project Manager
Racial Equity & Social Vulnerability Assessment	✓	🏠	👤	🌿	Resilience
Resilient Zoning Development & Implementation	✓	🤝	👥	🗺️	Resilience
Building Energy & Disclosure Feasibility	✓	🤝	👤	🌿	Sustainability
Green Communities Compliance	✓	🤝	👤	🗺️	Sustainability
Community-Based Emergency Preparedness Network	🟡	🏠	👤	🌿	Resilience
Community Rating System	🟡	🤝	👤	🌿	Resilience
Employer Heat Health Education	🟡	🏠	👤	🌿	Resilience
Mill Creek Flood Mitigation & Restoration	🟡	🏠	👤	🗺️	Resilience

On [Chelsea's Climate Resilience & Sustainability](#) page they include all ongoing and past projects with a description of the project and accessible materials to learn more information from. The page also includes an [annual report](#) that provides high level overview of project goals and status.



This infographic from the [City of Austin's Health Resilience Playbook](#) identifies neighborhood-based and citywide projects, programs, and policies that address extreme heat. Providing an overview of current initiatives can help inform residents of how their community is preparing for extreme heat and projects to look out for.

4. Municipal Contact

Include contact information of a person or office for people to ask non-emergency questions or seek guidance to resources. A common theme in community feedback for the Lower Mystic Cool Communications Project was that residents and community organizations wanted to know who they could contact if they had a question about resources or needed support accessing municipal services related to extreme heat.

The Malden Emergency Management team provides contact information for residents to reach out to.

5. Alert Systems Sign up

Promote emergency alert sign-ups for extreme heat warnings. To ensure residents receive timely information during heat emergencies, provide clear links to sign up for official alert systems. The sign up and message system should be offered in the major languages spoken in the community so all individuals can be adequately aware. Cities and towns can also cross-post community notifications on social media — Facebook, WhatsApp, WeChat, X, etc. — as well as local access TV and radio to help reach a wider audience. To help reach vulnerable communities, contact information to sign up for a special needs registry or reverse 911 can be offered.

Malden Alerts

Select Language

Powered by Google Translate

Sign Up for Emergency Alerts from the City of Malden

How It Works:

1. Click the "Sign Up" button below to customize your alert preferences.
2. Choose the categories you want to receive alerts about and update them anytime.
3. Enter your Malden street address to receive location-specific updates, such as roadwork or hydrant flushing.
4. Select your preferred language for alerts.

Get Alerts Your Way:

We'll send updates via email or text by default. Voice calls will only be used for emergency situations. Please provide your most reliable contact information and encourage family members or roommates to sign up, too!

Instructions in other languages:

[中文 报名登入说明](#)

[التعليمات باللغة العربية](#)

[Hướng dẫn bằng tiếng Việt](#)

[Instruções em português](#)

[Instrucciones en español](#)

[Enstriksyon an kreyòl ayisyen](#)

Sign up for Notifications

If you would like to sign up for notifications.

[Sign Up](#)

The [Malden Alerts page](#) includes sign up instructions in multiple languages so all residents of Malden can have equitable access to crucial alerts and help protect themselves.

Include links to state notification systems. The Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) uses [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#) to provide preparedness tips and information about emergency situations. Their [website](#) provides a range of emergency alert systems and other systems residents can join to be aware of important updates and seek support from.

6. Translated & Accessible Information

Create heat resource materials in accessible formats to effectively reach diverse audiences.

Using graphics that reflect the diversity of communities can help summarize the content and further engage residents to take action. If a community has specific cultural resources, embedding these services into heat resource materials can help garner awareness.

Prepare for Heat Season
 Flyers: 8.5 in x 11 in (PDF, PNG)
 Posters: 11 in x 17 in (PDF)
 Postcards: 8.5 in x 5.5 in (PDF)

Download printable PDFs and graphics:

English: Flyer | Graphic | Poster | Postcard
 Spanish (Español): Flyer | Graphic | Poster | Postcard
 Arabic (لغة عربية): Flyer | Graphic | Postcard
 Armenian (Հայերեն): Flyer | Graphic | Poster | Postcard
 Bangla (বাংলা): Flyer | Graphic | Postcard
 Chinese (中文): Flyer | Graphic | Poster | Postcard
 Farsi (فارسی): Flyer | Graphic | Postcard
 Hindi (हिंदी भाषा): Flyer | Graphic | Postcard
 Japanese (日本語): Flyer | Graphic | Poster | Postcard
 Khmer (ខ្មែរ): Flyer | Graphic | Postcard
 Korean (한국어): Flyer | Graphic | Poster | Postcard
 Russian (русский язык): Flyer | Graphic | Postcard
 Tagalog: Flyer | Graphic | Poster | Postcard
 Thai (ภาษาไทย): Flyer | Graphic | Poster | Postcard
 Vietnamese (tiếng Việt): Flyer | Graphic | Postcard

HEAT RELIEF RESOURCES

City of LA Heat Relief Programs
 Cool LA: Cooling Stations, Programs, and Resources (LADWP)
 City Extreme Heat Response (Emergency Management Department)
 SanteeLA: City Parks and Splash Pools (Department of Recreation and Parks)
 LA City Public Library Branches: Localities and Hours (Los Angeles Public Library)
 City: Recreation: Centers, Parks, and Facilities (Department of Recreation and Parks)
 North LA Emergency Alerts (Emergency Management Department)
 Hurricane Shelter (Resilience Programs LA/DFP)
 Climate Tool Kit for Communities (Office of the Mayor)

Heat Safety Communications
 CDC: Heat Safety (Spanish, Mandarin, Vietnamese, English, Spanish, Armenian, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Tagalog, Thai)
 LARC: Extreme Heat: Smart Alerts Campaign (Collaboration for Outreach and Engagement)
 WhatGreenCan.org (Aurora-Rock Resilience Center)
 Heat Wave and Heat Education Safety (Heat Crisis)
 Greater Boulder (Resilience Heat Waves Campaign)
 Heat Ready: CA (Office of Community Partnerships and Strategic Communications, CA Governor's Office of Planning and Research)

Extreme Heat Digital Maps & Tools
 Cool Streets LA App (City of LACEDMO)
 LA Cooling Centers (HeatSafeClimate)
 UCLA Heat Map (UCLA-COASHEM)
 CA Healthy Places Index: Extreme Heat Edition (CA Healthy Places)

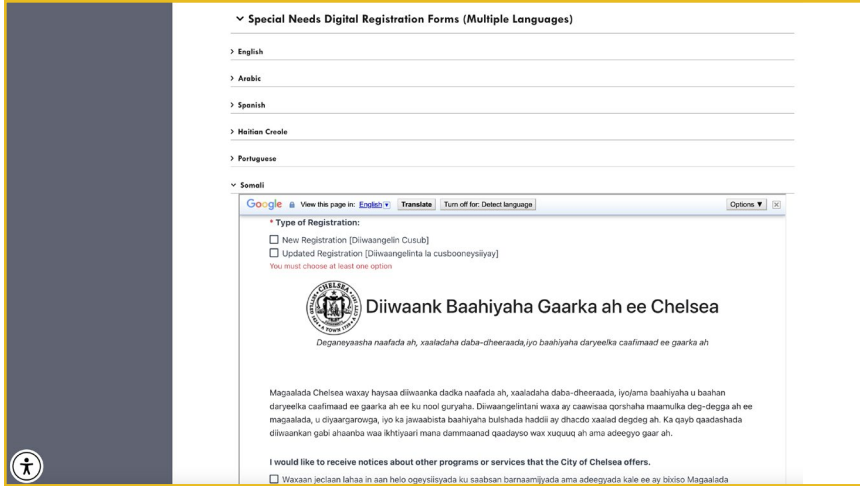
Relevant Extreme Heat Reports
 Turning Over the Heat: Addressing Heat Vulnerability of Frontline Communities in Los Angeles (UCLA Center for Public Health, Mayor of Public Policy Program)
 UCLA Heat Wave (UCLA-COASHEM)
 Identifying and Addressing Heat Vulnerability in the City of Los Angeles (UCLA Center for Public Health, Mayor of Urban and Regional Planning Program)
 Heat Fact Sheet (EPA's Urban Center for Innovation)

LA's [Heat Relief](#) website includes a page of printable outreach materials that are translated in numerous languages and are offered in the format of a flyer, graphic, poster, or postcard. The website also includes additional translated [heat safety communications](#) found on other organizations' platforms.

Ensure materials are translated. To identify which languages you need to provide translations for, consider the most commonly spoken languages in your municipality. When determining translation needs, you could also consider existing community partnerships that can help distribute information, identify populations who engage more frequently with municipal services and communities where residents predominantly don't speak English (versus those where bilingualism is more common).

Strategically translate website content. Ideally, translation should involve both a professional translator and cultural reviewer, though budget constraints may make this challenging for an entire website, especially with frequent content updates. Google Translate widgets are a good inclusion when professional translations aren't feasible for your entire site, providing basic accessibility for less critical content. However, the most important information—like emergency protocols and critical service information—should be professionally translated and available as downloadable, accessible PDFs to ensure accuracy and cultural appropriateness.

Boston adopted a [City ordinance](#) to make the City more accessible for people who use languages other than English. The policy uses a 5% threshold (or 10,000 people) to determine which languages receive prioritized interpretation and translation services. In other words, if more than 5% of the population speaks a given language, the city will provide information in that language.



The City of Chelsea's website includes both a translation and accessibility widget to provide basic accessibility. However, important information, like the form for the special needs registry, are professionally translated into multiple languages

Examples of Extreme Heat Websites



Looking for inspiration?

Here are some exemplary heat emergency websites we found in our scan that effectively serve their communities:

Los Angeles



[#HeatRelief4LA](#) offers a wide range of resources for residents to be prepared for heat emergencies. Cool Spots LA is a single interactive directory of all the public facilities that shows places residents can go to cool off during extreme heat waves. Additionally, the website provides an array of city heat relief programs, heat safety communications from organizations across the city, digital heat maps, and extreme heat reports. There is a sign up for extreme heat alerts, with heat safety outreach materials in 15 different languages.

HEAT RELIEF RESOURCES



City of LA Heat Relief Programs

- Cool LA: Cooling Rebates, Programs, and Resources (LADWP)
- City Extreme Heat Resources (Emergency Management Department)
- SwinLA: City Pools and Splash Pads (Department of Recreation and Parks)
- LA City Public Library Branches: Locations and Hours (Los Angeles Public Library)
- City Recreation Centers, Parks, and Facilities (Department of Recreation and Parks)
- NotifyLA Emergency Alerts (Emergency Management Department)
- Hydration Station Initiative Program (LADWP)
- Climate Tool Kit for Communities (Office of the Mayor)



Extreme Heat Digital Maps & Tools

- Cool Spots LA App (City of LACEMO)
- LA County Cooling Centers (ReadyLA County)
- UCLA Heat Maps (UCLA C-Solutions)
- CA Healthy Places Index: Extreme Heat Edition (CA Healthy Places)

Heat Safety Communications

- CEMO Heat Safety Outreach Materials (Multilingual: English, Spanish, Armenian, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Tagalog, Thai)
- LARC Extreme Heat Social Media Campaign (LA Regional Collaborative for Climate Action and Sustainability)
- #HeatSeason Campaign (Arsh-Rock Resilience Center)
- Heat Wave and Heat Exhaustion Safety (Red Cross)
- Disaster Readiness Resource Hub (Listos California)
- Heat Ready CA (Office of Community Partnerships and Strategic Communications, CA Governor's Office of Planning and Research)

Relevant Extreme Heat Reports

- Turning Down the Heat: Addressing Heat Inequities of Frontline Communities in Los Angeles (UCLA Luskin School of Public Affairs, Master of Public Policy program)
- Identifying and Addressing Heat Inequities in the City of Los Angeles (UCLA Luskin School of Public Affairs, Master of Urban and Regional Planning program)
- Heat Fact Sheet (UCLA Luskin Center for Innovation)



WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE WHEN CITIES CREATE SPACES FOR RESIDENTS TO STAY COOL AND SAFE?

COOLING CENTERS
SHADED SPOTS
WATER FEATURES
PLANTING TREES
DRINKING WATER

#HEATSEASON

SIGN UP FOR EXTREME HEAT ALERTS

In collaboration with the City's Emergency Management Department, Recreation and Parks, Library, and Public Works, and the County of LA, we launched a **proactive heat and public health awareness campaign** for the City and the Greater LA region. Help us reach vulnerable populations this summer by supporting the #HeatRelief4LA Campaign! Commit to support the #HeatRelief4LA Network.

Encourage your friends and community members to [sign up online for NotifyLA](#) extreme heat alerts. Post and share more resources online – use the hashtag #HeatRelief4LA and our team can share them with communities across LA!

Maricopa County, AZ

Maricopa County's extreme heat website incorporates videos of residents to demonstrate the actions they took to protect their health, or the health of others, and provides further information for residents on local resources they can utilize. The website includes an interactive heat relief map, heat reports, signs of health-related illness, tips to stay safe, and multilingual assistance programs. There is a sign up for heat warning alerts through the Arizona department of health services. The [heat relief toolkit](#) includes expansive digital and printable content regarding heat safety tips, high risk groups, health relief assistance, and heat safety materials.

HEAT RELIEF TOOLKIT

Help keep people safer against extreme heat by sharing our campaign assets with your social media network!

Below are graphics that can be used for social media posts or in other digital spaces, with suggested texts that could be properly modified and customized for specific groups or organizations. Printable signage, fact sheets, and other resources have also been provided to support countywide heat relief efforts.

Contact Us for more information about co-branding toolkit materials or for alternative format needs.

Social Media and Digital Content | Printables and Signage | Partner Links | Media Resources

Social Media & Digital Content

- HEAT SAFETY TIPS
- HIGH RISK GROUPS
- HEAT RELIEF ASSISTANCE
- DIGITAL DISPLAY

Heat Safety Tips

- Drink water before you get thirsty
- Don't stay outdoors for long periods of time
- Stay hydrated with 8-10 glasses of water a day
- Wear lightweight clothing
- Check on friends and neighbors
- Check on vulnerable people during extreme heat

Protect yourself from the heat and sun

- Apply SPF 30+ sunscreen prior to going out and remember to reapply
- Wear a hat or use an umbrella
- Wear sunglasses to protect your eyes

Stay hydrated

- Help your kids stay hydrated throughout the day!

maricopa.gov/heat

STAYING SAFE IN THE EXTREME HEAT

En Español

The Final Annual Heat-Related Deaths Report for 2024 is available. Find this and other reports on the [Heat Reports](#) page.

Call 2-1-1 | Heat Relief Sites

FIND FREE PLACES TO COOL OFF

Heat Relief Sites like cooling centers, respite centers, and hydration stations are established throughout Maricopa County during the summer from May 1 - September 30 and extreme heat events for those who do not have access to indoor cool environments.

Cooling and respite centers can be community centers, churches, and other community-based organizations that provide water and serve as a safe, cool indoor place during the day for refuge from the heat. Call 2-1-1 for free assistance or visit the [Heat Relief Regional Network](#) to learn more.

Interested in hosting a site this summer? [Register your organization](#)

For media inquiries, please contact us at phs@maricopa.gov.

Find A Heat Relief Site Near You

Heat Reports & Statistics | Heat Alerts | Heat Relief Toolkit | Heat Relief Volunteers