

Plan and Prepare for Extreme Heat

Action Updates

This action is available for the **current certification cycle** and was newly added in 2023.

Objective

Establish extreme heat and heat emergency response plans. Implement strategies to reduce extreme heat.

Complementary Action:

- [Plan for Long Term Recovery](#)
- [Promote Cool Roofs](#)

What to Do

1. Develop a municipal or regional heat emergency plan. This may be a standalone plan or a part of the municipal or regional emergency operations plan. The purpose of a heat emergency plan is to prepare for extreme heat events and protect residents from heat-related illness. **(up to 30 points)**

The more you do, the more points you earn.

- a. Assemble a committee that will be responsible for at least one of the following duties: to assess and plan for heat emergencies, to develop a formal heat emergency plan, and to respond to heat emergencies. This group should include key community stakeholders (including vulnerable populations within the community), municipal or regional public health officers, municipal or regional social services officers, and municipal or regional EDMs. The Connecticut Department of Public Health and the Connecticut Division of Emergency Management and Homeland Security can also be consulted or involved in creating the plan. You may leverage other existing committees (such as your Sustainability Team, your Long-Term Recovery committee, or an existing emergency planning or hazard mitigation committee) to assist with this task. **(5 points)**

Submit: A list of names and titles/sectors of current members of committee; and at least one additional piece of documentation related to the meetings, such as a promotional flyer, an agenda, minutes, presentations, or photographs.

Timeframe for Credit: Eligible for new action credit and rolling credit. This action falls under the action type "Websites, Maps, Inventories, Checklists, Assessments, Plans, Ordinances, Policies, Regulations and Resolutions" (see ["Timeframe for Credit" Guidance Document](#) for submission requirements).

- b. Conduct a heat assessment, using the Connecticut Institute for Resilience & Climate Adaptation (CIRCA) [heat vulnerability index](#), the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration [Future Heat Events and Social Vulnerability map](#), or similar tool. This should include which areas of the municipality or region are most at risk during an extreme heat

event, and which populations are most vulnerable. The [CDC identifies the following populations at being especially vulnerable to extreme heat](#): infants and young children; adults aged 65 or older; people with chronic health conditions, low-income populations, athletes, outdoor workers, and pregnant people. Share the completed heat assessment with relevant municipal departments and officials. **(10 points)**

Submit: A copy of the completed heat assessment, evidence that the assessment was distributed to relevant municipal departments (either via email, in-person meeting, staff newsletter, etc.)

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- c. Identify and disseminate extreme heat educational materials to residents and and/or businesses. The information included in the educational materials should address both specific extreme heat emergencies and general education on extreme heat and health and safety measures. The educational materials should be shared through multiple communications channels, such as online, at events, printed materials (at libraries, grocery stores, restaurants, in tax bills, town booklets), etc.; it should also be available in multiple languages as needed. The communications strategy should especially target more vulnerable populations. **(5 points)**

Note: Multiple federal agencies, including FEMA and the EPA, have social media toolkits focused on extreme heat and public health. See resources links below for these existing sample educational and communications materials.

Submit: An overview of your outreach strategy (5 sentences maximum), including target populations (if any) and at least one example from among the materials disseminated, which could include flyers, articles, letters, newsletters, presentations, or digital communications. For websites, submit both a hyperlink and a screenshot of the relevant webpage(s).

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- d. Complete a heat emergency plan. The plan must include the elements described in b and c, as well as: specific responsibilities for municipal officials, community partners, and others involved in a heat emergency response; strategies to support the municipality's or region's most vulnerable residents; and a timeline for regular plan reevaluation, allowing for future improvements or revisions. **(10 points)**

Submit: Your municipality's officially adopted heat emergency plan, documentation of the plan adoption (such as meeting minutes or similar verification), and a completed worksheet 1.

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2. Inventory, create, and improve cooling centers. Cooling centers are free, accessible spaces open to the public during extreme heat events that must provide air conditioning. Ideally, air conditioning or HVAC should be connected to a generator, in case of power outages due to surge in electricity demand or due

to a storm. Examples of cooling centers include municipally owned spaces such as libraries, schools, and community centers. Municipalities can also partner with privately owned spaces such as malls, movie theaters, or houses of worship to serve as cooling centers. These air-conditioned and cooled locations provide an environment for residents without air conditioning, for unhoused residents, and for others who lack access to air conditioning. **(up to 40 points)**

The more you do, the more points you earn.

- a. **Inventory:** Assess existing cooling centers in the municipality or region, and complete worksheet 2. Post the locations, hours, and amenities of all cooling centers on your municipal website. **(10 points)**
- b. **Create:** Identify neighborhoods or areas that are lacking in easily accessible cooling centers. Work with public and private property owners, residents, and community organizations to identify new sites for cooling centers. Add new cooling centers to worksheet 2, and post the locations, hours, and amenities on your municipal website. **(15 points)**
- c. **Improve:** Add at least three amenities (see list in worksheet 2 for examples; other amenities not listed may also be added) to an existing cooling center. Submit an updated worksheet 2 reflecting the new features. **(5 points per cooling center, up to 15 points)**

Submit: A completed worksheet 2; hyperlink and screenshot of municipal website displaying the information included in the inventory; description of how cooling center updates are incorporated into emergency announcements; for privately owned spaces used as cooling centers, submit documentation of a formal agreement between the municipality and property owner (such as a letter, memorandum of understanding, etc.).

Timeframe for Credit: Eligible for new action credit and rolling credit. This action falls under the action type "Websites, Maps, Inventories, Checklists, Assessments, Plans, Ordinances, Policies, Regulations and Resolutions" (see "Timeframe for Credit" Guidance Document for submission requirements).

Timeframe for Credit

Actions can either be "New" or considered for "Rolling Credit."

New Action Credit. Any action completed within the past three years (from January 1 of the year seeking certification) is eligible for potential certification points. If you are applying for recertification in your year of expiration, you may not claim *New Action Credit* for items that previously received credit.

Rolling Credit. For any action older than three years (from January 1 of the year seeking certification), you must demonstrate ongoing, currently relevant, and meaningful impact in your community to be considered for certification points. If you are applying for recertification in your year of expiration, you must apply for *Rolling Credit* for any item that previously received credit, even if it was completed within the past three years.

View the "Timeframe for Credit" Guidance Document for detailed submission requirements.

Engaging Partners

Sustainable CT encourages regional collaboration and other forms of partnership. For every action, please complete the "partners" box in your submission, indicating the name(s) of any municipalities and/or organizations you partnered with (if any) and a brief description of your municipality's role. For additional information, please see the Partners Guidance Document.

Potential Municipal and Community Collaborators

Appropriate municipal and community stakeholders should be involved, with specific collaborators dependent upon the action items selected above. Generally, stakeholders include any municipal, regional, or state health representatives; any municipal, regional, or state emergency planning representatives; emergency medical services operators or providers; community organizations representing and serving populations especially vulnerable to heat; members of populations especially vulnerable to heat; and municipal entities, nonprofits, community organizations, or businesses that may operate cooling centers.

Why This Matters

Extreme heat can pose a serious health threat, both causing heat-related illnesses (such as heat stroke or heat exhaustion) and also exacerbating other chronic conditions, such as heart and kidney lung disease. With Connecticut seeing more high-heat events as climate change raises temperatures, addressing extreme heat is an important public health measure. Planning for extreme heat response can help reduce incidents of illness and even death.

Benefits

Many strategies to address extreme heat have a wide range of co-benefits. Cooling centers and community-based efforts to assist residents during extreme heat events can strengthen neighborhood ties and community cohesion. Strategies to mitigate extreme heat such as cool roofs and planting initiatives can help reduce energy demand, lower energy bills, improve air quality, and manage stormwater. Crucially, since extreme heat is especially threatening to socially vulnerable populations, there are equity benefits as well.

For a complete list of funding opportunities, implementation resources, and success stories specific to this action, please visit the full Action write-up on the [Sustainable CT Actions webpage](#).