10.6 Plan and Prepare for Extreme Heat

5 – 70 Points

Action Updates

This action was last updated in 2026. The previous version of this action is available for comparison. Edits are highlighted in yellow.

Objective

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

Complementary Actions:

- Plan for Long Term Recovery
- Promote Cool Roofs

What to Do

1. Plan for a municipal or regional heat emergency. This may be a standalone planning process or a part of municipal or regional emergency operations planning. The purpose of heat emergency planning 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 emergency management officers. 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. The committee must be active and meet at least annually. **(5 points)**

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

   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. **(10 points)**

   Submit: A copy of the completed heat assessment and a completed worksheet 1. If your heat assessment was conducted more than three years ago, also include a brief description of how it is still relevant and used by your municipality.

c. Identify and disseminate extreme heat educational materials to residents 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. If this is a long-term, ongoing education and outreach program, there must have been activity in the last three years. **(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 of the materials disseminated in the last three years, which could include flyers, articles, letters, newsletters, presentations, or digital communications. These materials must pertain to extreme heat and not just general emergency management. For websites, submit both a hyperlink and a screenshot of the relevant webpage(s).

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, an internal memo, or similar verification), and a completed worksheet 2. If your heat emergency plan was adopted more than three years ago, also include a brief description of how it is still relevant and used by your municipality. This subaction is included in the Sustainable CT Climate Leader Designation.

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 to 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 3. 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. Ideally, your municipality should work with public and private property owners, residents, and community organizations to identify new sites for cooling centers. Add new cooling centers to worksheet 3, and post the locations, hours, and amenities on your municipal website. New cooling centers must have been opened in the last three years to be eligible for points. This subaction is included in the Sustainable CT Climate Leader Designation. **(15 points)**

   c. Improve: Add at least one amenity (see list in worksheet 3 for examples; other amenities not listed may also be added) to an existing cooling center. Submit an updated worksheet 3 and clearly note the new feature(s). Improvements to cooling centers must have been made in the last three years to be eligible for points. This subaction is included in the Sustainable CT Climate Leader Designation. **(5 points per amenity, up to 15 points)**

   Submit: A completed worksheet 3. 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.). If your cooling center inventory was created more than three years ago,

also include a brief description of how it is still relevant and used by your municipality.

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. If you collaborate with other municipalities, each community will receive points. 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.

Funding

If available, below are potential funding sources specific to this Action. For a complete listing of potential funding opportunities to assist with implementing Sustainable CT Actions, please visit the Sustainable CT Grants Portal, which is searchable by Action. Please also visit the Support for Your Town page for opportunities for technical assistance and other supports.

- Urban Act Grant Program
- Sustainable CT Community Match Fund
- State Funding Readiness Project

- FEMA Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities Funds
- Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)

Resources

Toolkits, Calculators, Guidance Documents

- Centers for Disease Control, Protecting Disproportionately Affected Populations from Extreme Heat
- 211 of Connecticut, Cooling Center Directory
- Yale Center on Climate Change and Health, "Extreme Heat in Connecticut"
- Connecticut Institute for Resilience & Climate Adaptation, Climate Change Vulnerability Index - Heat
- Connecticut Institute for Resilience & Climate Adaptation, Identifying the Change in Heat Vulnerability and Land-use Influence
- Yale Center for Earth Observation, Global Surface Urban Heat Island Explorer
- Federal Emergency Management Agency, Extreme Heat Safety Social Media Toolkit
- US Environmental Protection Agency, Cool Your Community Social Media Toolkit
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Climate and Health Strategic Framework

Organizations and Relevant Programs

- National Integrated Heat Health Information System, HEAT.gov
- Centers for Disease Control, Extreme Heat
- Federal Emergency Management Agency, Extreme Heat
- Connecticut Institute for Resilience & Climate Adaptation
- CT Department of Public Health, Extreme Heat
- CT Division of Emergency Management and Homeland Security, Extreme Heat and Cooling Centers
- US Environmental Protection Agency, Heat Island Effect
- Yale Center on Climate Change and Health

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.

CT Success Stories

- Middletown - Sep 2023 Certification
- Glastonbury - Oct 2024 Certification
- Groton - Oct 2024 Certification
- Manchester - Oct 2025 Certification