



Hamilton

CITY OF HAMILTON COMMUNITY HEAT RESPONSE PLAN

May 2023

Healthy & Safe Communities Department

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Introduction

Hot weather can contribute to the development of heat-related illness to the general population. Some groups, including seniors, young children, and people with pre-existing medical conditions, may be less able to cope and acclimatize to hot weather conditions, and are considered as having an increased risk of showing signs and symptoms of heat-related illness.

The City of Hamilton, in consultation with community partners, has developed the Community Heat Response Plan to help citizens cope with intense heat events. The Community Heat Response Plan (hereinafter referred to as the Plan) alerts the public that hot weather conditions are imminent or occurring and outline services that will be provided to Hamilton residents. The goal is to provide support and information for those most at-risk of heat-related illness.

The heat season is from Victoria Day Weekend to Labour Day Weekend however it is dependent on the weather patterns hence this plan could be activated outside of this time.

Background

This initiative was developed collaboratively by agencies in Hamilton, forming the Community Heat Response Committee (CHRC) in 2002. All agencies participating in the development of this initiative have agreed to voluntarily provide services during a Heat Warning, or an Extended Heat Warning. Since the introduction of the Plan in 2008, several heat events have tested the effectiveness of existing services and the merit of the Plan. The Plan has proved to be successful in helping citizens safely respond to these events.

Purpose

The Plan provides a framework for the coordination and implementation of hot weather response activities aimed at reducing the impact of intense heat events on the population.

Plan Review and Maintenance

The Community Heat Response Plan (The Plan) will be reviewed on an annual basis. Prior to the heat season, the CHRC meets to review The Plan, adjust any operational details and update contact information and committee partners, as needed. Following each heat season, the CHRC meets in order to debrief on challenges, concerns and successes identified during the heat season and to provide recommendations for improvements to the Plan.

In 2023, Public Health Services – Healthy Environments Division (PHS – HED) is responsible for the maintenance of The Plan and oversight of the CHRC.

Pre-Heat Season Activities

Prior to each heat season the CHRC will:

- Meet to ensure that CHRC members understand signs and symptoms of heat-related illness and that each partner agency has their own heat response plan and/or understands their operational role during a Heat Warning, or Extended Heat Warning;
- Distribute a promotional materials order form to internal and community partners to be returned to PHS – HED for ordering;
- Update contact list of CHRC members and community partners to receive notifications of Heat Warnings and Extended Heat Warnings;

Prior to each heat season PHS - HED will:

- Provide heat-related illness information sessions for applicable City departments and community partners;
- Distribute promotional awareness information materials to City and community partners as requested;
- Update the “Rave Alert” notification system list of City and community partners for communicating Heat Warnings and Extended Heat Warnings

Concept of Operations – Thresholds to Activate the Heat Response Plan

The Plan consists of 3 stages: Heat Warning, Extended Heat Warning, and a stand-down stage. PHS – HED monitors Environment Canada's temperature and humidex forecasts during the summer months. If it is determined that a response is required, cool place operators, community agencies, and the public are notified, and response action undertaken as outlined below.

Heat Warning

A Heat Warning is issued when there are two or more consecutive days forecasted with daytime highs greater than or equal to 31°C and nighttime lows greater than or equal to 20°C **or** a Humidex of 40°C or greater.

When a Heat Warning is issued the following actions are undertaken:

- PHS - HED sends out notification of the Heat Warning via the “Rave Alert” messaging system to community partners and external stakeholders as well as an internal email notification of the Heat Warning to internal partners and local media;

- Scheduled public, family, adult and senior swims will be free of charge, at indoor and outdoor pools (capacity limits in effect as per Public Health Guidelines);
- Participating City and community partners offer spaces as 'cooling places';
- Recreation "Supie" Programs will remain operational but modify program to a more passive nature;
- Mobile water distribution by the Salvation Army in downtown core

Extended Heat Warning

An Extended Heat Warning is issued when there are three or more consecutive days observed with daytime highs greater than or equal to 31°C and nighttime lows greater than or equal to 20°C or a Humidex of 40°C or greater

When an Extended Heat Warning is issued the following actions are undertaken:

- PHS - HED sends out notification of the Extended Heat Warning event via the "Rave Alert" messaging system to community partners and external stakeholders as well as an internal email notification to internal partners and local media;
- Activation of the City Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) may occur if there is a need to discuss further interventions. Note: only members of the EOC Management Team may request the activation of the EOC (virtual activation could be considered);
- PHS will monitor and assess surveillance data from hospitals and health sector agencies with respect to any community health impact;
- The CHRC Chair will send an email to the members during business hours each day in an Extended Heat Warning, to facilitate the sharing of operational data. Emergencies that occur outside of Monday to Friday business hours are directed to the attention of PHS and the on-call Communications staff or in accordance with the Community Partner's internal procedure;
- Scheduled public, family, adult and senior swims will be free of charge at indoor and outdoor pools (capacity limits in effect as per Public Health Guidelines);
- All wading pools (except for Dundas Driving Park) are closed during an Extended Heat Warning. Community members can visit an indoor/outdoor pool or spray pad;
- Recreation's "Supie" Programs will remain operational but modify programming to a more passive nature;

- Mobile water distribution by the Salvation Army in downtown core

Stand Down

When the conditions of a Heat Warning or Extended Heat Warning break and are no longer met, a “Stand Down” is initiated.

When the Stand Down is called the following actions are undertaken:

- PHS - HED issues a cancellation notification of the Heat Warning or the Extended Heat Warning to staff, community partners, external stakeholders and local media;
- all City and community partner agencies return to normal operating procedures;

Roles and Responsibilities

Healthy & Safe Communities Department

Public Health Services

Schedule and facilitate meetings of the CHRC;

- Monitor weather forecasts and communications from Environment Canada for Heat Warnings and Extended Heat Warnings to be issued;
- Send out notifications of the Heat Warning or Extended Heat Warning via internal email to staff, other internal partners, and local media. Notify external partners and stakeholders via “Rave Alert” notification system;
- Update stage status on City website (www.hamilton.ca/heat) to reflect current stage of the plan;
- Print and distribute promotional awareness information material to community partners as requested;
- Respond to media requests related to the signs and symptoms of heat-related illness;
- Communicate with CHRC partners during an Extended Heat Warning to learn of any concerns and/or opportunities related to the Heat Response Plan for review and discussion among the CHRC members;

Recreation

- Operate City-owned recreation centres as cool places;
- Distribute and communicate information to the public at recreation centres;

- Post “Cool Down Here” and “Tips for Beating the Heat” signs in visible locations at recreation centres for the duration of the heat season;
- Scheduled public, family, adult and senior swims will be free of charge at indoor and outdoor pools during Heat Warning and Extended Heat Warning (capacity limits in effect as per Public Health Guidelines);
- Suspend outdoor recreation programs and wading pools when appropriate;
- Respond to media inquiries related to recreation facilities and related programming;

Paramedic Services

- Through social media, send heat-related information and tips to keep cool for the general public.
- Respond to health-related issues as appropriate
- Increase staffing as required

Public Works Department

Parks and Cemeteries

- Extend splash pad hours of operations, as required;
- Ensure drinking water fountains are operational and information re: locations is updated on City website

City Manager’s Office

Communications

- Triage internal and external communications related to media enquiries and distribute proactive communications on social media channels;
- Update information on the City’s website (www.hamilton.ca/heat) regarding, cool tips, cool places, etc.

Human Resources

- Distribute information via email to staff with respect to employee health and wellness during extreme heat episodes;
- Handle all employee work refusal issues related to heat;
- Incorporate Heat and Sun Safety and UV Radiation Guidelines into orientation sessions where applicable

Hamilton Public Library

- Library branches will act as 'cooling' places for residents during regular business hours

Community Partners - "Cooling" Place Agencies

- Operate as a cooling place for the public and/or clientele
- Distribute information to the public
- Post "Cool Down Here" and "Tips to Beat the Heat" signs in visible locations for the duration of the heat season;
- Liaise with PHS – HED staff regarding heat impacts to their clientele;
- Salvation Army – mobile water distribution in downtown core