

Beat the Heat

Practical Actions to Reduce Community Heat Risk

Extreme heat is one of the greatest climate-related health risks facing communities today, as climate change increases the frequency and severity of heat events.

Extreme heat can affect residents, public spaces, municipal services, and community infrastructure, requiring proactive planning and coordination. Small and rural municipalities can take immediate steps to improve preparedness through affordable, scalable actions that increase awareness, support residents, and make better use of existing resources.

How to Read Cost and Effort Scales

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In-Kind/Staff Time



Implement through routine operations

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Cover within existing budgets



Some dedicated coordination required

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Additional resources required



At the upper-end of a quick-win action

Designate Dual-Purpose Cooling Centres

Designate existing municipal buildings such as recreation centres or libraries as dual-purpose centres for extreme temperatures, triggered automatically by Environment and Climate Change Canada alerts.

When to Get Started: Put forward a council resolution or CEMP amendment designating the facility, trigger, and on-call contact.



Recommended Lead: Emergency Management

[Explore Lambton County Public Health's protocols and templates](#)

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Potential Partners

- Facilities
- Local Libraries
- Public Health

Key Metric

% of residents within X distance of a designated cooling centre

Establish Heat Surveillance Network

Train Meals on Wheels volunteers or Community Support Services staff to add a 2-minute heat check to every delivery or home visit during Heat Warnings.

When to Get Started: Contact local Meals on Wheels and Community Support Services before the summer season.



Recommended Lead: Public Health or Emergency Management

[Discover how the Town of Melita partnered with Meals on Wheels](#)

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Potential Partners

- Community Services
- Meals on Wheels
- VON Canada

Key Metric

of residents receiving wellness checks during Heat Warnings

Develop Heat Alert Communications Toolkit

Develop reusable heat messaging templates and outreach materials using Ontario's 15 standardized messages in the Harmonized Heat Warning and Information System.

When to Get Started: Initiate during annual CEMP review, with templates finalized before the start of the heat season



Recommended Lead: Emergency Management

[Explore Health Canada's Heat-Health Messages](#)

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Potential Partners

- Communications
- Public Health
- EC AlertME

Key Metric

of standardized heat communication products developed and ready for use

Host Heat Safety Pop-Up Events

Host seasonal heat safety pop-up events in public spaces to educate on heat risks, promote cooling resources, and share [practical tips and tools](#) to stay safe during extreme heat.

When to Get Started: Integrate into existing municipal events, outreach, and seasonal programming schedules



Recommended Lead: Emergency Management

[Learn from the City of Timmins' Heat Safe Pop-Up event](#)

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Potential Partners

- Community Safety and Well-Being Committee
- Public Health

Key Metric

of residents reached through annual outreach

Increase Shade in Heat-Exposed Public Spaces

Implement small-scale planting projects using climate-appropriate shade trees in high-use public spaces through existing tree-planting programs and volunteer planting events.

When to Get Started: Meet with your local conservation authority to identify programs, funding opportunities, and priority planting sites.



Recommended Lead: Public Works

[Learn about "Arbor Day" in the City of Woodstock](#)

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Potential Partners

- Conservation Authority
- Forests Ontario

Key Metric

of public spaces with new shade coverage

Your dedicated partner in climate adaptation

Working on a climate-related project? Our ORCCA Support Desk can help with:

- Accessing Climate Information
- Adaptation Planning
- Finding Tools and Resources
- Building Capacity and Advancing Action
- Making Connections

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