

May 9, 2024

Local Government Guidance: 2024 is Projected to be a Hot and Smoky Summer

Dear Community Leaders,

There is potential for 2024 to be a very hot and smoky summer. As we have experienced in the past years, extreme heat and wildfire smoke events can have devastating health impacts. These impacts are expected to worsen without adaptation and mitigation measures. Building enhanced resilience to these events requires an all-of-society approach, with many organizations working to minimize negative impacts on our communities. This is why we are sharing our yearly summer communication to assist in preparation.

Local governments are one of the most trusted sources of guidance and information on extreme weather, often ahead of health authorities. **Fraser Health Authority (FHA) is asking partners to update their plans, act in the case of extreme weather events, and promote, and share messaging and resources we and our partners, such as BC Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC), have developed to help keep residents safe.**

Highlights for this year:

- **BC Heat Alert Response System (BC HARS):**
 - The updated [BC HARS](#) is similar to last year. However, recent evidence suggests that higher temperatures earlier in the year can be particularly dangerous because people have not yet had the time to acclimatize to warmer summer temperatures. In spring/early summer, people may experience heat exhaustion or other health effects at temperatures up to 3° C lower than in mid to late summer.
 - The BC HARS system's thresholds remain unchanged. However, **should our region experience heat early in the year, we encourage local governments to activate cooling plans if you have capacity. Partners will be supported by EMCR to respond to an early summer heat event as if it was a heat warning.**
- **Cooling Map Portal:**
 - In 2023, the BC Government created an [online portal](#) to allow all local governments to post locations of cooling centres, water access points, or spray parks for the public. Please ensure that your teams upload and update locations.
 - **Please contact your regional [Emergency Management and Climate Readiness \(EMCR\) office](#) for more information.**
- **BC Air Quality Health Index (AQHI):**

- BC residents may not be familiar with the Air Quality Health Index (AQHI). It provides local air quality ratings, including messages to help people make decisions about outdoor activities.
- Since air quality can change quickly, the AQHI can provide important guidance for activities and events in addition to air quality alerts issued by Metro Vancouver and BC Ministry of Environment.
- **Please post and share AQHI updates and information on your social media.**
- **Resources:**
 - Factsheet on [Wildfire Smoke and Pregnancy \(BCCDC\)](#)
 - Factsheet on [Medications and Heat Interaction Guide](#) (Government of BC) (Government of BC)
 - Factsheet on [Extreme Heat Preparedness for Those Who Use Substances \(Toward the Heart\)](#)
 - Information on [BC Hydro Free Cooling Program for Income-Qualified Residents](#)
 - Information on Window Safety: [How to Prevent Children Falling Out of Windows](#)
 - Updated: [Summer Heat, Smoke and Health: Recommended Actions for Owners and Managers of Rental and/or Strata Housing](#) (FHA/VCH)(FHA/VCH)
 - [Cooling Shelter Guidance for local governments and non-profits](#) (VCH) (VCH)
 - [Guidance for Outdoor Events for Smoke and Heat](#) (VCH) (VCH)
 - [Policy Tools for Cooler Spaces \(VCH\)](#)spaces (VCH)
 - Video: [How to Make Do-It-Yourself \(DIY\) Air Cleaners](#)
 - Video: [How to Keep Your Home Cool](#)
 - Video: [Developing a Check-in System](#)

The FHA Healthy Environments team continues to be dedicated to supporting your local government in developing or updating municipal heat and smoke response plans. Some elements we recommend including are:

- **A designated point of contact between the local government or regional district and Fraser Health** with respect to heat and wildfire smoke events.
- Pre-season planning with key partners, including first responders, your health authority, and non-governmental organizations in your area, with a focus on susceptible populations.
- **A phased or scalable response plan** that can be tailored to the given situation and could include responses such as opening cool/cleaner air spaces, expanding access to drinking water in public spaces, expanding hours of air-conditioned facilities, rescheduling events, etc.
- **Communication plans to be activated in the event of heat or air quality alerts** to inform the public and key partners about the anticipated event, possible impacts, protective actions, and local government resources.
 - Draft messaging is available from the [BC Government](#). Fraser Health also creates social media content, which can be amplified before and during events through your channels.
 - [Check-in guides](#) can be promoted through social media channels or partners.
 - Staff and partner organizations who work with residents who are not comfortable with English can connect residents to extreme weather checks provided by [MOSAIC](#) (most Lower Mainland communities).

- Cooling centre locations, where applicable, can be shared with non-governmental organizations and the public to help ensure spaces are well-used, especially if advertised ahead of season.
- **Window safety information** is available that can be shared with the public to prevent children from falling out of windows during the hot summer.

Most funding for extreme heat preparedness in your communities require local governments to be partners/applicants. Partnering with organizations already connected to susceptible residents can be effective in expanding your reach.

Long-term heat and wildfire smoke adaptation strategies can include:

- Amending or creating **standards of maintenance by-laws to require adequate air conditioning/cooling and enhanced air filtration** for parts or all of a building. Please contact FHA for more information.
- **Enhancing Land use planning policies (e.g., urban forest and tree canopy cover) that reduce urban heat islands** and support people's use of cool areas such as shaded parks.
- Increasing **public amenities with energy efficient air conditioning and good air filtration.**
- Working with housing providers and non-profit organizations to ensure that there are spaces where people who are unhoused or otherwise marginalized feel safe and welcome to access during extreme weather, ideally in areas people are already located.
- Increasing permanent drinking water access points in public spaces.

As part of our own response to heat and wildfires, FHA has undertaken several initiatives, including seasonal readiness planning for health authority programs and facilities, developing resources, assisting in policy development, collaborative projects, and monitoring, and providing support to local partners.

In addition, over the last several years, we have worked with researchers at the University of British Columbia (UBC) and at Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH) to develop [climate vulnerability maps](#) that spatially represent community vulnerability to four climate hazards (heat, smoke, ozone, and flooding). We are happy to discuss how these maps and other health evidence may be integrated into your climate planning, to provide presentations regarding the health implications of heat and smoke, to assist in policy development, and to provide other guidance where possible.

If you are interested in engaging with us, please contact your Medical Health Officer or the Healthy Environment team at healthybuiltenvironment@fraserhealth.ca.

Thank you for supporting health in your community.

Sincerely,



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Additional Extreme Heat Resources:

Extreme Heat	Description
Public Education Resources	
Fraser Health Extreme Heat Webpage	Resources for the public, community partners and health professionals regarding extreme heat.
Toward the Heart – Harm Reduction Resources	Harm reduction for those who use substances, including making a cool kit, supporting people with mental health challenges and those who use substances.
Fan FAQ and Infographic	New evidence about potential risks of fans from FHA.
Heat Preparation for Seniors and People with Chronic Illnesses (FHA/VCH) *multiple languages	Information on why seniors and people with chronic illnesses are more vulnerable to heat and what to do to protect them.
PreparedBC Extreme Heat Guide (Government of BC) *multiple languages	Information to help the public understand the risks of extreme heat and create plans to prepare and respond to protect their health.
Health Checks During Extreme Heat (NCCEH) *multiple languages	Guidance for the public on how to do in-person or remote check-ins on vulnerable people, including identification, questions to ask, and actions to take.
Extreme Heat Infographic (FHA/VCH) *multiple languages	General heat illness guidance and how to minimize and respond if someone is experiencing heat exhaustion or heat stroke.
Intact Centre on Climate Adaption - Apartment and Condo Heat Protection	Information to assist the public with cooling options for their homes.

Fact sheet: Staying Healthy in the Heat	Three one-page infographics: “Signs and Symptoms,” “Who’s at Risk” and “Safety Tips.”
Brochure: Protect Yourself From Extreme Heat	Heat related illness and actions individuals can take to prepare for extreme heat.
Window Fall Infographic *multiple languages	Actions that individuals can take to prevent window falls.
Heat Response Planning	
Developing a Municipal Heat Response Plan: A Guide for Medium Sized Municipalities	In-depth information on the development of a municipal heat response plan including pre-season preparation and implementation.
Interior Health - Heat Alert and Response Planning for Interior BC Communities (Jul 2020)	A user-friendly BC resource for Heat Alert and Response Planning.
How to be a Heat/Smoke Healthy Business Leader (FHA)	Guidance for businesses to provide relief to the public (FHA encourages sharing through business licensing).
Pet-Related Guidance for Extreme Heat Shelters and Businesses	Information on health considerations for allowing pets in cooling shelters.
Intact Centre on Climate Adaption - Apartment and Condo Heat Protection	Information to assist the public with cooling options for their homes.
Intact Centre on Climate Adaptation - Irreversible Extreme heat: Protecting Canadians and Communities from a Lethal Future (2022)	Guide for action that individuals, property owners, managers, and communities can take to mitigate the risks of extreme heat events including 1) planning and behavioural changes, 2) working with nature, and 3) improving buildings and public infrastructure.
BC Housing: Planning Resources	BC housing heat response planning resources.
AARP - Do-It-Yourself Project: Help Someone Stay Cool in Extreme Heat	Resources for promoting neighbours to check on one another during extreme heat events by the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP).
Primer for Organizations Supporting those Experiencing Homelessness	Resources for supporting people experiencing homelessness during extreme heat events.
WorkSafe BC - Heat Stress	Resources on how to protect outdoor works during extreme heat.
Wildfire Smoke during Heat Events	Smoke and heat events often happen at the same time. This resource offers information about how people can protect themselves in these situations.
Regional Heat Alerts	
Weather App	Weather app for Android and IOS devices.
Public Weather Alerts for Canada and How to Use Public Weather Alert Maps and Tables	Weather alerts across Canada; how to interpret the different weather alerts.

Additional Wildfire Smoke and Air Quality Resources

Wildfire Smoke and Air Quality	Description
Public Education Resources	
Prepare for the Worst: 10 Steps to Prepare for Wildfire Smoke (BCCDC)	Article from BCCDC scientists to help the public prepare for the health impacts of smoke.
Fraser Health Air Quality and Wildfires Page	Resources related to the public health impacts of poor air quality and wildfires.
Wildfire Smoke Response Planning (BCCDC)	In-depth information for the public with fact sheets regarding wildfire smoke and health.
Wildfires and Your Health	Information and links to resources from HealthLink BC for before, during and after a wildfire (including stress and trauma).
Smoke Infographics (FHA/VCH) *multiple languages	General information on smoke health impacts and what can be done to mitigate them.
Monitoring	
BC Air Quality Subscription Service Metro Vancouver Air Quality Advisories	Subscribe to receive emails when Smoky Sky Bulletins (outside of Metro Vancouver) or Air Quality advisories are issued (Metro Vancouver).
FireWork Environment Canada Daily Smoke Forecast Maps	Wildfire smoke forecast map for Canada.
BC Air Quality <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Air Quality Health Index (AQHI) • BC Particulate Matter (PM2.5) Data • Smoky Skies Bulletins • Metro Vancouver Air Quality Advisories (email) 	Contains air quality information. Note that the AQHI and particulate matter data is not available for all communities. The Smoky Skies Bulletins are issued when there is a higher likelihood of smoke in a region.
BC Wildfire Service App	Interactive wildfire map.
Response	
Clean Air Shelters	A quick guide to clean air shelters.
Guidance for Cleaner Air Spaces During Wildfire Smoke Events	In-depth guide on how to identify buildings for clean air spaces and how to equip them once identified.
Evidence Review: Home and Community Clean Air Shelters to Protect Public Health During Wildfire Smoke Events	In-depth considerations regarding home clean air shelters (HCASs) and community clean air shelters (CCASs).
WorkSafe BC Health and Safety Resources for the Wildfire Season	WorkSafe BC information to protect workers.
BCCDC - Guidance for BC Public Health Decision Makes during Wildfire Smoke Events (2014)	This guidance provides BC-specific guidance about tools for situational awareness (smoke and health surveillance) and summarizes the evidence for effectiveness of intervention measures to protect public health.

<u>BC Health and Smoke Exposure (HASE) Coordination Committee Guideline (2021)</u>	This guideline describes how the Health Wildfire Smoke Response Coordination Group will support regional response to a wildfire smoke event in BC.
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