

Although Vermont is well-known for its cold winters, a similar number of Vermonters visit the emergency room or call 9-1-1 each year for heat-related illnesses as they do for cold-related illnesses. In cool climates, limited acclimation and a lack of preparedness increase heat-related health risks. Unseasonably hot days early in the year can be particularly harmful, as it takes time for our bodies to adjust to warmer weather.

Heat-related illnesses in Vermont mainly occur between May and September. Vermont data indicates that emergency department visits for heat-related illnesses most often occur when temperatures rise into the 80s, with impacts worsening as temperatures reach the upper 80s and into the 90s. Humid conditions make the temperature feel even hotter.

Climate change is increasing heat-related health risks in Vermont. Average temperatures in Vermont have already risen by 3°F since 1900, resulting in more hot days and warm nights each year when heat may impact health. We can expect more frequent and harmful hot weather in the future, with an additional 3 to 12°F of warming expected by 2100.

Populations Most Affected by Heat

Although all Vermonters are affected by hot weather, there are specific factors that increase an individual's risk of experiencing heat-related health impacts. The risk for heat-related illnesses tends to be greater for the following groups of people:

- **People with more exposure to hot conditions** – people without access to air conditioning, outdoor workers and hobbyists, people experiencing homelessness, and urban residents
- **People that are particularly sensitive to heat exposure** – anyone not acclimated to hot weather, older adults, young children, people who are pregnant, people who are overweight, people with chronic medical conditions, people with disabilities, people using drugs, alcohol or some prescription medications, and people having a prior heat-related illness
- **People with limited adaptation resources** – people who live alone, have limited transportation options, are unable to purchase or use an air conditioner, or are unable to access community cooling resources

Role of the THO

THOs should consider using the following strategies in their community:

- Use Front Porch Forum or social media to raise awareness – examples are provided in our [Hot Weather Media Toolkit](#).
- Share [heat safety tips](#) in 12 languages (available online or as printable PDFs). Safety tips are available in Arabic, Burmese, Chinese, English, French, Karen, Kirundi, Nepali, Somali, Spanish, Swahili, and Vietnamese.

KEY POINTS

- **Heat illnesses can be deadly.**
- **THOs can help prepare and protect their communities from hot weather**

Animal Bites and Rabies Testing

- Be familiar with [symptoms of heat-related illnesses and first aid responses](#).
- Consider opening a [cooling center](#), which could be any air-conditioned, publicly accessible location (for example, a library or community center). If you are aware of other cooling locations we should add to the map please submit them through the [online cooling site form](#).
- Offer safe and fun ways to stay cool, such as free or extended access to beaches and pools, providing hoses or misters, and offering free cold beverages.
- Mobilize local care networks to check in on people at high risk for heat-related illnesses.
- For outdoor work, recreational activities, or other local events, ensure that organizations are prepared with water, cooling strategies, and event modification or cancellation plans.
- Hot weather can affect anyone – be aware of your own symptoms and look out for others.
- Find additional community strategies in the [Local Hot Weather Preparedness Guidance](#). Collaborate with community partners to use the [Planning Template](#) to create a local hot weather emergency response plan.

Stay Informed

Follow weather forecasts and alerts from the National Weather Service and other news and weather media outlets. Resources that may be particularly helpful include:

- [Vermont Alert](#): Sign up for Vermont Alert to receive notifications by text, phone, or email when the NWS issues a heat-related weather advisory. Please make sure to select “heat alerts” from the list of subscription options.
- [Department of Public Safety weather alerts](#): Subscribe to weather alerts from the Vermont Department of Public Safety.
- [NWS Excessive Heat Awareness and Safety](#): See Vermont observations and forecasts for temperature, heat index, wet bulb globe temperature, and HeatRisk.
- [NWS Hazardous Weather Outlook](#): Provides a seven-day forecast map for Vermont for heat and many other weather hazards.

More Information

- Visit the Vermont Department of Health’s [Hot Weather Safety](#) webpage.
- Call the Vermont Department of Health/Environmental Health at 802-863-7220, ext. 0, or email ClimateHealth@vermont.gov.