
Heat Emergencies and You



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- Spanish interpretation
- American Sign Language (ASL) interpretation
- CART captioning in English and Spanish

Language Access

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Agenda:

- Heat emergencies
- Dangers of extreme heat
- Protecting our communities from extreme heat

What are Heat Emergencies?

- **Heat emergencies** are situations where extreme heat and humidity create a risk to people's health.
- Heat.gov says "**extreme heat**" is 2 days or more of temperatures above 90°F (32°C).

What are Heat Emergencies?

- Sometimes extreme heat means it is much hotter than usual where you live.
- Some people live in hot places. They are used to hot weather. They usually know how to stay safe. That makes temperatures that are higher than normal more dangerous.

Why is Extreme Heat Dangerous?

- Heat makes it hard for people's bodies to keep them cool.
- When people sweat they lose water and **electrolytes**.
 - Electrolytes are chemicals that your body needs to function
- More people die from heat than any other weather related emergencies.

Who is Extreme Heat Most Dangerous To?

- Some people are at more risk from heat than others:
 - Older people
 - Children
 - People with disabilities
 - People who work outside
 - People who are homeless
 - People in institutions and prisons
 - People who live in very hot places

Heat Emergencies and People with IDD

- People with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) are more at risk in heat emergencies than people without IDD.
- But many people do not think about people with IDD when thinking about heat risks.

Why are People with IDD at Greater Risk?

- Other medical conditions
 - Medications
- Living situations
 - Insecure housing
 - Group homes or institutions
 - Day programs or congregate community events

Why are People with IDD at Greater Risk?

- Working situations
 - High risk jobs like outdoors work or work with limited cooling

Why are People with IDD at Greater Risk?

- Communication
 - Communication disabilities
 - Hard to communicate heat-related distress
 - Behavior changes labeled “challenging”

Why are People with IDD at Greater Risk?

- Knowledge of heat dangers
 - Individuals
 - Supporters/caregivers
 - Providers

Protecting Our Communities

Summary

This presentation is a summary of “Cooling the Crisis:
A Policy Brief on Protecting People with IDD from Heat Emergencies”

Overview of Making Heat Risk Less Risky

This section looks at:

- Heat risk factors
- Short- and long-term heat strategies for advocates and public health

We focus on how heat affects people with IDD.

Prevention

- Prevention = Stopping
- Heat-related illness and death does not have to happen as much.
 - It is stoppable.
- Advocates, including lawyers and people who make policy

And

Public health that are educated about the heat can help fix this.

Policy and Risk Reduction

Policies are rules and laws the government makes.

These agreements can be changed to protect the health and save lives of people with IDD during extreme heat.

Heat Risk Strategies

How can advocates, including lawyers, and people that make policy and public health, stop people from being hurt by heat?

- Make sure that people with IDD are part of and lead planning talks and meetings.

Heat Risk Strategies

- Make sure the people with IDD also are part of other groups that may not be treated fairly.
 - Example: people of color, LGBTQIA+, etc.
- Figure out who is not “at the table” and make sure they are welcomed.

Universal Heat Risk Strategies

- Listen to the experiences of people with IDD who have experienced a disaster.
- Support the leadership of people with IDD who have experienced a disaster.

Universal Heat Risk Strategies

- Make sure the people with IDD also are part of other groups that may not be treated fairly.
- Start partnerships between government agencies and trusted organizations that work directly with marginalized communities.

Universal Heat Risk Strategies

- Make sure the planning process is accessible to disabled people.

See ASAN's Inclusive Meetings: The Autistic Self Advocacy Network's Community Living Summit and The Partnership for Inclusive Disaster Strategies' *Making Virtual Meetings and Events Accessible*.

Universal Heat Risk Strategies

Ways for advocates, including lawyers and policy makers, and public health to reduce heat risk:

- Pay people with IDD who are also members of other groups who are treated unfairly to take on decision-making roles

Universal Heat Risk Strategies

- Get groups to work together in a big group, which are often called coalitions.
- Coalitions should include organizations that people trust and government agencies, such as public health and emergency management.

Universal Heat Risk Strategies

- Use these coalitions to create a plan to follow when a heat emergency happens.
- The plan needs to support people with IDD with different races, genders, etc.

Universal Heat Risk Strategies

- Require that heat plans and policies explicitly address the compounded risks created by disability, race, poverty, housing instability, gender identity, and other intersecting forms of oppression.

Universal Heat Risk Strategies

- Make sure all heat communications and materials are always accessible.
 - Create multiple formats in: plain language, Easy Read, multiple languages, large print, etc.
- Require vendors and partners to meet those standards.

Universal Heat Risk Strategies

- Develop a plan to reach out to the community when a heat emergency happens.
- Make sure this plan includes outreaching with people with IDD and other groups that are treated unfairly.
- Regularly share accessible materials in accordance with this plan.

Heat Risk Factors

Certain conditions increase the risk of heat-related illness and death for people with IDD.

These include:

- Intersectional oppression: When people with IDD belong to multiple groups that are treated unfairly, they are more in danger from heat

Heat Risk Factors

- Poverty
- Schools without adequate cooling
- Being unhoused
- Prisons and Jails
- Segregated congregate settings
 - Institutions
 - Nursing facilities

Strategies to Address Risk Factors

There are long and short term strategies to address specific risk factors.

These factors may be different for advocacy and public health

Ways to Lower Heat Risk

There are strategies that advocates and public health can use to lessen the risk.

Some are universal and apply for most risks.

Others are related to specific risks.

Stay tuned for a toolkit and policy brief with more.

Thanks for listening! Any questions?

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