



Heat & Health in Phoenix

INFORMATION FOR COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS



WHY IS PHOENIX ACTING?

Since 2016, the City of Phoenix has implemented heat action plans and policies to mitigate the health effects of heat. Approaching extreme heat as a public health emergency with seasonal efforts from May to October 2026.

However, Phoenix has experienced increasingly longer and more intense heat seasons, often occurring before the city begins its heat efforts.

POPULATIONS MOST AFFECTED



Older Adults



Unhoused People



Young Children



Outdoor Workers



Energy insecure households



Households without reliable cooling

HOW IS PHOENIX RESPONDING?



SHORT-TERM HEAT RESPONSES



Cooling & 24 Hour Respite Centers



Hydration Stations



Emergency Medical Response



Heat Alerts & Communication



Community Outreach



Utility Shut-Off Prevention (water & electricity)



URBAN HEAT ISLANDS

Are commonly found in metropolitan areas and are a result of impervious surfaces and a lack of green space.

LONG-TERM HEAT RESPONSES



Urban Forestry & Shade Plan



Indoor cooling ordinance



Climate Action Plan



Outdoor Worker Protections



Cool Pavement Initiatives

FOUR THINGS COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS SHOULD KNOW



1

THE HEAT RELIEF NETWORK

A partnership composed of community-based organizations, businesses, and government agencies that maps heat relief efforts throughout Arizona.



2

ARIZONA EXTREME HEAT PREPAREDNESS PLAN

A statewide plan outlining how agencies are preparing to fight the heat. The plan includes recommendations for safe and affordable housing, as well as emergency response.



3

HEAT IS MORE THAN TEMPERATURE

The effects of heat on health are shaped by housing quality, energy affordability, neighborhood shade, transportation, food security, and access to cooling resources.



4

RECOGNIZING HEAT ILLNESS

Heat can overwhelm the body. Look for signs of heat illness, such as dizziness, confusion, thirst, headaches, and muscle cramps.

WHAT SHOULD YOU LISTEN FOR DURING FOCUS GROUPS



COOLING AT HOME

- Can people afford energy costs?
- Does the A/C or swamp cooler work?
- Can the home stay cool?
- What strategies do people use to stay cool?



COMMUNITY RESOURCES

- Do people know about cooling centers?
- Where do they get heat information from?
- Who do they go to for help? (i.e., family, friends, neighbors, community organizations)



NEIGHBORHOOD ENVIRONMENT

- Are there trees?
- Is there shade?
- Parks and their condition
- Bus stop conditions
- Access to cooling corridors
- Walkability (i.e., shade, safety, and sense of belonging)
- Access to community resources



HEALTH & IMPACTS

- How does heat affect daily life?
- Have they experienced heat-related illness?
- Who struggles most during heat waves?
- What is the perception of heat and health?
- Are health appointments missed because of the heat?
- Is their children's mental health impacted during the summer months because of heat?

SUGGESTED QUESTIONS YOU COULD ASK



Where do you go when your home gets too hot?



Have you ever used a cooling center? If so, how did you choose one?



What prevents you from staying cool at home?



If you are experiencing a heat emergency, what would you do?



Have you noticed changes that made your neighborhood cooler or hotter?



What services, policies, or programs would help you or your neighborhood stay safe from the heat?

WHAT ELSE SHOULD THEY KNOW?

- Were people generally aware of the heat initiatives and policies?
- Did people feel represented in heat initiatives and policies?
- What other policies, programs, or initiatives were mentioned that relate to heat and health?
- Based on what you heard in the focus group, do you think Phoenix is a national leader in heat governance?
- How can governments, community organizations, and heat-vulnerable communities collaborate?
- What else should we know?

PRIMARY TAKEAWAY

Phoenix is recognized as a national leader in heat resilience. Their approach to heat governance combines emergency response, housing protections, public health, and long-term climate adaptation strategies to reduce heat-related illness. Policy, the built environment, and structural injustices influence people's exposure to heat and thus can shape health outcomes. Community organizations play a critical role in advocating for and helping residents to access these resources, as well as identifying where gaps remain. To ensure that everybody has an opportunity to thrive where they live, work, and play.

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