

WHY IS BOSTON ACTING?

New England is experiencing the fastest climate warming of any region in the U.S. In Boston, heat waves are becoming more common, increasing health risks for residents. Older housing, limited access to air conditioning, and neighborhoods affected by the urban heat island effect make some communities more vulnerable than others.

Boston is investing in policies and programs focused on heat mitigation and resilience while addressing broader climate and environmental challenges.

POPULATIONS MOST AFFECTED



Older Adults



Unhoused People



Young Children



Outdoor Wokers



Energy insecure households



Households without reliable cooling

HOW IS BOSTON RESPONDING?

SHORT-TERM HEAT RESPONSES

-  [BCYF Cooling Centers](#)
-  [Cooling Resources Map](#)
-  [Summer Eats Food Program](#)
-  [AlertBoston](#)
-  [Outdoor Cool Spaces](#)
-  [B-Cool Heat monitoring](#)
-  [Utility Shut-Off Protections](#)
(Eligibility applies; Gas, water, and 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 Plan](#)
-  [Climate Ready Boston](#)
-  [2030 Climate Action Plan](#)
-  [Outdoor Worker Protections](#)
-  [Community-Led Chinatown Heat Action Plan](#)
-  [Boston Community Choice Electricity](#)

FOUR THINGS COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS SHOULD KNOW

1



[2030 CLIMATE ACTION PLAN IMPLEMENTATION DASHBOARD](#)

Aligned with the climate justice framework, this tool assesses progress and tracks the extent to which strategies advance racial, social, and economic equity in climate action.

2



[KEEPING COOL IN THE HEAT CITY WEBSITE](#)

A site with resources, information, and tips on staying cool in the summer. Includes heatwave preparation, important contacts, health information, and factsheets.

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 cooling system 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 Boston is a national leader in heat governance?
- How can governments, community organizations, and heat-vulnerable communities collaborate?
- What else should we know?

PRIMARY TAKEAWAY

Boston approaches heat governance as a combination of emergency response, community resources, climate adaptation, and long-term investments to reduce heat exposure and protect health through an environmental justice lens.

Community organizations play a vital role in connecting residents to resources, identifying gaps, and working with local government to ensure that community voices are being heard in the decision-making processes. So that everybody has an opportunity to thrive where they live, work, and play.

