**Resource guide:**

**Heat planning**

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| **Purpose**  This document provides long-term care and assisted living operators with actions to take to provide a safe environment for residents / tenants (hereby referred to as “residents”) and staff during a heat event. The document has been organized into four stages:   1. Plan (planning and assessing risk prior to the summer season) 2. Prepare (preparing and ensuring readiness prior to a heat event) 3. Respond (response and actions to take during a heat event) 4. Evaluate (assessing response to a heat event and learning for the future) | | | |
| **Plan\*** | **Prepare** | **Respond** | **Evaluate** |
| *Before May 1* | *Before June 1* | *Upon notification* | *Post event* |
| Finalize heat plan template | Source supplies and equipment | Implement cooling and hydration plans | Debrief with team |
| Complete site assessment checklist | Address opportunities in site assessment | Increase resident health checks | Revise your plans |
| Identify high risk residents and  adjust care plans | Education teams, residents and families | Complete temperature checks |  |
| \*Use the toolkit (Appendix A) to complete these steps | | | |

Within each stage, there are specific actions to be taken to ensure plan readiness, plan execution, plan and progress evaluation and learnings for the future, as outlined below. Some of these are required, while others are recommendations to keep your residents and team members safe during the summer season. Each action in the planning stage has an associated resource, included in a toolkit ([Appendix A](#_Appendix_A_–)).

The required elements are noted throughout this document and apply to long-term care only.

# Heat Alert Response System (HARS)

To provide the public and partner organizations with a warning of the health risk from heat events, temperature thresholds have been established by The BC Health Effects of Anomalous Temperatures (BC HEAT) Coordinating Committee (BC HEAT Committee). The overarching objective is to support planning and response efforts related to public health impacts for significant heat events in BC.

Within British Columbia, there are two types of heat alerts that can be issued. Criteria specific to the Fraser region is outline below:

**Heat warning**

Once the criteria is met, Environment and Climate Change Canada issue alerts for the specific regions.

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| Tier | Region | Criteria |
| Heat warning | **Southwest** |  |
| Western Metro Vancouver, including the North Shore, City of Vancouver and Richmond, Howe Sound, Whistler, Sunshine Coast, Vancouver Island (except northern sections) | 2 or more consecutive days of daytime maximum temperatures are expected to reach 29°C or warmer and nighttime minimum temperatures are expected to be at 16°C or warmer |
| **Southwest inland** |  |
| Eastern Metro Vancouver including Coquitlam and Surrey, and the Fraser Valley | 2 or more consecutive days of daytime maximum temperatures are expected to reach 33°C or warmer and nighttime minimum temperatures are expected to be at 17°C or warmer |

**Extreme heat emergency**

Once the criteria is met, and based a decision from the BC HEAT Committee, Environment and Climate Change Canada issue alerts for the specific regions.

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| Tier | Region | Criteria |
| Extreme heat emergency | **Southwest** |  |
| Western Metro Vancouver, including the North Shore, City of Vancouver and Richmond, Howe Sound, Whistler, Sunshine Coast, Vancouver Island (except northern sections) | Daytime maximum temperatures are expected to reach 31°C or warmer, based on today’s temperature and tomorrow’s forecasted max |
| **Southwest inland** |  |
| Eastern Metro Vancouver including Coquitlam and Surrey, and the Fraser Valley | Daytime maximum temperatures are expected to reach 34°C or warmer, based on today’s temperature and tomorrow’s forecasted max |

# Licensing

A new licensing recommendation for summer heat is in effect within Vancouver Coastal Health. This recommendation applies to all long-term care operators (regardless of funding source). Assisted living operators are also encouraged to consider this recommendation where possible.

The **recommendation** can be found in Appendix E and suggests three components of all long-term care operators:

1. A written heat plan which summarizes the following:
   1. Standard measures
   2. Escalated measures
   3. Emergency measures
2. Measurement of indoor temperature daily from May 1 to September 30 or any day where the exterior temperature exceeds 22° Celsius.
3. Implementation of emergency response plans as outlined in the Heat plan

# Stage 1 – Plan

The first step is to plan for the heat event. This stage includes all of the assessment and planning actions that will be required before you take any action.

There are three steps that you can take to plan well in advance of a summer heat event. Each of these steps has resources that have been developed to support you in your planning.

All care homes are encouraged to update their heat plan, complete their site assessment and a resident risk assessment **before May 1 annually**. Care plans should be updated for the highest risk residents at the same time and can be modified as new residents move in and out throughout the summer season.

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| **Step** | **Resource** |
| Develop a heat preparation and response plan | * Heat Plan Guideline |
| Complete a site assessment | * Site Assessment Checklist |
| Complete a resident risk assessment & modify care plans for highest risk residents | * Resident Risk Assessment |

# Stage 2 – Prepare

The second step in ensuring readiness for the heat season is to prepare for a heat event. This stage outlines the actions to be taken to ensure readiness, such as purchasing supplies and equipment, completing required maintenance on equipment, etc.

All care homes are encouraged to complete this stage before June 1 annually. This includes sourcing equipment and supplies, and providing education on heat to residents, staff and families.

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| **Step** | **Resource** |
| Source equipment and supplies | * Preparation checklist |
| Address opportunities identified in the site assessment |
| Educate team members, residents and families to ensure readiness | * Tabletop exercise and professional practice education series |

# Stage 3 – Response

This stage outlines the actions taken in direct response to an event after there has been a trigger. This stage includes implementing the completed heat plans as appropriate, and utilizing the preparation steps that have been done up to that point.

Initiate this stage upon notification of a heat wave. Notification can come from, but is not limited to, the health authority.\* Sites are encouraged to initiate their heat plans before an official notification of a heat event, if specific circumstances warrant it.

Regardless of notification, always follow the licensing recommendation and the guidance in the heat plan to implement standard, escalated, and emergency measures to ensure that indoor temperatures remain below 26° Celsius.

\*Other possible notifications can come from your municipality, Environment and Climate Change Canada, or from local temperature readings at your site

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| **Step** | **Resource** |
| Temperature monitoring | * Heat plan * Temperature log |
| Implementation of the heat plan | * Heat response checklist * Escalation and notification visual * Heat plan |
| Communications to residents, families, and staff | * Heat poster * Family letter templates |

# Stage 4 – Evaluation

This section will be updated in the next iteration.

# Appendix A – Toolkit

Within each stage of heat events, there are specific actions to be taken to ensure plan readiness, plan execution, plan and progress evaluation and learnings for the future, as outlined below. Each stage has associated resource(s), which are mapped out below. Together, these resources are referred to as the ‘toolkit.’ In addition to heat-specific resources, there are generic resources that should be considered (included in grey text).

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| **Plan** | **Prepare** | **Respond** | **Evaluate** |
| Heat plan outline | Preparation checklist | Escalation and notification flowchart | Debrief |
| Heat plan template | Tabletop exercise | Temperature log | After action report |
| Site assessment checklist |  | Heat response checklist |  |
| Resident risk identification |  | Heat plan\* |  |
| Licensing recommendation |  | Heat poster |  |
|  |  | Family letter templates |  |

\*Completed heat plan template

🡪 Access and download the resources listed in the toolkit from the [VCH Emergency Management page](https://one.vch.ca/dept-project/health-emergency-management/Pages/Seasonal-and-hazards-plans.aspx).