



Date: August 10, 2018  
To: Patrick H. West, City Manager *PHW*  
From: Kelly Colopy, Director of Health and Human Services *KC*  
For: Mayor and Members of the City Council

**Subject: City of Long Beach Extreme Heat Events and Activation of Cooling Centers**

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The Long Beach Health and Human Services Department (Health Department) regularly monitors and responds to extreme heat conditions. The Health Department works closely with other City departments to reduce the potential for harm to Long Beach residents caused by an extreme heat event (EHE).

When an EHE is forecasted, the Health Department conducts a wide range of activities to mitigate negative impacts to the public's health, including the following:

- Public awareness and education via heat advisories or alerts and social media messaging.
- Coordination with the Department of Parks, Recreation, and Marine to prepare for and initiate the activation of cooling centers with extended hours.
- Surveillance for heat illnesses by contacting local Emergency Departments (EDs) and Fire Dispatch to determine if there have been cases of heat-related illness.

### **Defining "Extreme Heat" Events**

There is no universally accepted definition of a "heat wave" or "extreme heat event." An EHE represents a significant increase in temperature in relation to the average for a given geographical location at a specific time of year. The average temperatures are derived from analysis of decades of climatic data.

In Los Angeles County, an EHE will occur at a higher temperature threshold in parts of the San Fernando Valley (Woodland Hills, Chatsworth), San Gabriel Valley (Pasadena, Claremont), than in the Los Angeles basin itself or coastal communities (Santa Monica). Because of its directional orientation on the coast, the blocking effects of the Palos Verdes Peninsula, and heat island effects, the average temperatures in Long Beach show more variability than other communities situated directly on the Pacific coast. Therefore, it is important to remember that when an extreme heat warning is issued for Los Angeles County, it may not necessarily apply to Long Beach. The Health Department relies on the **heat index** (a measure of how hot it really feels when relative humidity is factored in with the actual air temperature) to determine which measures to take. A heat index of 95 degrees over two or more days, or over at least one night, is the threshold for activating extended cooling center hours and other EHE activities.

### **Extreme Heat Facts:**

Despite heat-related deaths and illnesses being preventable, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) reports that approximately 618 people in the United States are killed each year by EHEs.

Older adults, the very young, and people with mental illness and chronic diseases are at the highest risk for heat-related illness and death. However, even young and healthy people can be affected if they participate in strenuous physical activities during hot weather. Pets are also vulnerable to the effects of extreme heat.

### **Cooling Centers:**

A cooling center is an air-conditioned public space set up by local authorities to temporarily deal with the health effects of a heat wave. Cooling centers provide shade, water, and restrooms; medical attention and referrals to social services may also be offered.

All Long Beach public facilities, including libraries and recreation centers, can be utilized as cooling centers during normal business hours. On average, about four people utilize a City cooling center on a given day during an EHE. Although not City-operated, malls, movie theaters, stores, and coffee shops can all be utilized as cooling centers as well. Information about cooling center hours can be found on the City's [website](#).

During an EHE, the City Health Officer may issue an order to extend cooling center hours at certain locations, based on nationally accepted scientific guidelines. Generally, recreation centers throughout the City are used for extended cooling center activation. When hours are extended at designated cooling centers, the public may be notified via AlertLB, press alerts, and social media. Extending hours at recreation centers results in overtime costs to the Department of Parks, Recreation, and Marine. Currently, there is no dedicated funding within the City to respond to EHEs. Parks, Recreation and Marine estimates \$100 per cooling center in personnel and operational costs for each hour a cooling center is activated. The costs associated with an EHE response create an additional financial burden to the departments who respond to these events.

For more information about EHEs, please visit: [www.longbeach.gov/health](http://www.longbeach.gov/health) and follow the Health Department on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

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