

Case Study 3

Community Response to Extreme Heat Events in the City of Ottawa

A Heat and Smog Action Plan, passed by Council in 2004, formalized a community response to extreme heat events in the City of Ottawa, Ontario. One goal of the *Plan* is to ensure the safety of heat-vulnerable groups in Ottawa by delivering timely emergency response measures when needed. During heat alerts, city officials work with a range of community service organizations to protect vulnerable populations by:

- ▶ distributing heat alert and heat warning notifications to targeted service providers by e-mail and fax
- ▶ converting all lane swims to leisure swims in city pools
- ▶ recommending places the public can go to cool down (e.g. city wading pools, splash pads, beaches, libraries, community centres)
- ▶ partnering with a local movie theatre that provides free and discounted movie tickets at a location that is easily accessible by public transportation
- ▶ deploying a street outreach van (through the Salvation Army) to offer water to homeless people and transportation to local shelters
- ▶ offering information via a 311 telephone service for inquiries, including contact with a public health nurse
- ▶ assigning public health nurses to visit heat-vulnerable populations living in high-rise buildings to ensure they are able to access cool environments. These visited buildings are identified in advance based on resident makeup (i.e. high number of seniors and young children, rooming houses, low income, lack of air conditioning)
- ▶ distributing fans to rooming house residents
- ▶ encouraging city departments (e.g. road crews, maintenance workers) to follow outdoor heat guidelines



Source: City of Ottawa, Ont.

Continue to next page

Case Study 3

Community Response to Extreme Heat Events in the City of Ottawa

Through its website and exchange with service providers, the City provides or supports community response measures before and during extreme heat events. It offers a *Hot Weather Resource Kit* that includes:

- ▶ “Beat the Heat This Summer!”—information on response measures implemented by the city and where people can go to cool down; includes a media backgrounder on a heat alert and a news release, and is available in 51 languages
- ▶ sample of a heat warning
- ▶ “What to Do in a Heat Wave”—information for the public on how to stay cool and hydrated
- ▶ “Screening Tool for Heat Illness” lists heat-illness risk factors and symptoms, and provides information on actions that should be taken to protect health
- ▶ individual handouts on heat stroke, dehydration, sunburn, medications and heat-related illnesses, fun facts
- ▶ links to information on park locations, pool schedules, summer safety for pets, working in hot environments
- ▶ “Extreme Hot Weather Initiative—Information Brochure for Service Providers to the Homeless”
- ▶ “Surviving Summer Power Outages During Heat Waves”

The city’s outreach and response efforts have been integrated into the activities of many community organizations. These organizations also take action on their own during extreme heat events. For example, the Ottawa Carleton Ultimate Association reminds players to take extra breaks, drink plenty of fluids, and seek out or bring shade to the game. The rules of the game are modified during a heat alert to ensure safety of the players by permitting heat-related substitutions and increasing the number of timeouts per period from 2 to 3 and increasing their duration from 70 seconds to 120 seconds.

For more information on the City of Ottawa HARS, visit
http://ottawa.ca/en/health_safety/living/outdoor/hot/index.html.