

Case Study 5

How Windsor-Essex Communicates Heat-Health Risks to the Public



As part of HARS development, Windsor-Essex, Ontario, emphasized development and implementation of its communication campaign. Early in the process, marketing experts were consulted to examine heat-health communication activities in the city and in other communities with existing HARS. This information gathered helped identify heat-health communication goals and outreach strategies. It was also used to develop a STAY COOL Windsor-Essex logo that brands the city's communication activities. Additional tools being used to raise awareness are shown in Figure 12.

Figure 12: Branding of the HARS



Source: City of Windsor, Ont., 2010.

Through extensive consultations with stakeholders, including officials from the City of Detroit, and a review of best communication practices, the City of Windsor developed a number of outreach strategies to support three priority communication goals:

Goal 1: Inform residents and visitors of the effects of extreme heat and the actions required to reduce the risks.

Outreach strategies

- ▶ Inform media of heat alerts and provide information products
- ▶ Establish a hub for communicating and sharing information on heat-alert activities with stakeholders in addition to the website and 211 services
- ▶ Complete an audit of existing heat alert communication practices to determine lessons learned
- ▶ Use an e-mail blast that will notify anyone who signed up that a heat alert has been issued with an embedded website link for more information

Continue to next page

Case Study 5

How Windsor-Essex Communicates Heat-Health Risks to the Public

Goal 2: Educate residents and visitors about extreme heat events and the measures being taken to protect them from health risks.

Outreach strategies

- ▶ Launch an education campaign
- ▶ Inform city residents and visitors about who will issue heat alerts and where to find out if a heat alert has been called
- ▶ Extend the reach of communication materials through the development of strategic partnerships
- ▶ Develop a media plan that considers mass media and includes targeted communication activities

Goal 3: Educate emergency responders and service providers about key indicators of an extreme heat event and the necessary policies and procedures for responding to or identifying health effects.

Outreach strategies

- ▶ Host train-the-trainer events to educate community partners on available educational tools and key messages
- ▶ Gain support for expanded participation by community partners during heat alerts (e.g. open cooling facilities, check on heat-vulnerable populations)

In early communication efforts during development of its HARS, Windsor implemented a targeted approach to reach the public and engage stakeholders. For example, it published two advertisements in the *Summer Activity Guide* that included heat-health information tailored to the general public and to those caring for infants and young children. Print advertisements were also placed in the summer editions of *Windsor Parent Magazine* and *Retirement Living*, which are free to the public. In 2011, the Windsor Essex County Health Unit drafted articles on heat and heat-illnesses that local papers and magazines included in their publications. Other outreach strategies completed in 2011 included pharmacy labels to reach people taking medications that could put them at risk, business cards with heat-health information for the physically active, colouring place mats for young children and fridge magnets for older adults. Partnerships developed through HARS will help to increase the effectiveness of messages delivered to the public.

For more information on the Windsor HARS, visit www.staycoolwindsor-essex.com.