

2026 Updated
Strategies & Approaches

to the 2024 ADHS Recommendations and Findings
for the Arizona Extreme Heat Preparedness Plan

ARIZONA
— DEPARTMENT OF —
HEALTH SERVICES



Horseshoe Bend located just southwest of Page, Arizona.

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Acknowledgment

The Arizona Department of Health Services (ADHS) Bureau of Resiliency and the Environment (BRE) extends our deepest gratitude to everyone who contributed to the ongoing evolution of the [ADHS Recommendations and Findings for the Arizona Extreme Heat Preparedness Plan](#). Your efforts remain instrumental in advancing heat resiliency and ensuring health and wellness for all Arizonans.

We sincerely thank our diverse partners across community organizations, academic institutions, and local, state, federal, and Tribal agencies. The insights and experiences shared during our hosted meetings, surveys, and annual Arizona Heat Preparedness Events continue to be essential to this iterative process. Your dedication to focused discussions and collaboration has been pivotal in turning a collective vision into actionable, year-round outcomes.

Finally, we extend our sincere thanks to Governor Hobbs for the leadership and support that continues to allow us to build upon existing efforts, foster new public-private partnerships, and work toward the recognition of heat as a public health priority.

Together, we have taken significant strides to enhance the resilience of Arizona communities. Thank you for your continued collaboration and unwavering commitment to a more sustainable and resilient future for our state

INTRODUCTION

Since the release of the 2024 [ADHS Recommendations and Findings for the Arizona Extreme Heat Preparedness Plan Heat Report](#) and the [2025 Updated Strategies and Approaches](#), Arizona has made meaningful progress toward the four overarching goals which continue to guide the collective efforts to protect all those in Arizona from extreme heat:

- Drive Heat Relief Activities.
- Reduce Heat-Related Illnesses and Deaths.
- Prepare for Extreme Heat.
- Foster Innovate Solutions.

State agencies, counties, tribes, community-based organizations, and private-sector partners have bolstered coordination, expanded heat relief capacity, improved surveillance and communication systems, and elevated heat as a cross-sector priority.

This report provides an update on Arizona’s progress toward implementing the 2024 ADHS Recommendations and Findings and advancing statewide heat resilience efforts. It builds on prior recommendations by documenting actions taken in 2025, highlighting outcomes and lessons learned, and identifying priorities for continued collaboration in 2026.

The report is intended to support policymakers, local and Tribal partners, community organizations, and the public by offering a clear picture of heat-related impacts, coordinated response efforts, and shared strategies to protect health and safety during extreme heat events.



Tracking Performance Measures

2024 Performance Measure	Status Update (January 2025)
By June 30, 2025, make progress on 100% of recommendations in the Extreme Heat Action Plan.	Progress was made on all recommendations in 2024.
By June 30, 2025, increase the number of facilities reporting heat-related illnesses into the syndromic surveillance system (n = 89/98).	90/98 facilities are reporting heat-related illnesses into the syndromic surveillance system.
By June 30, 2025, stabilize the number of heat-related emergency department visits (2022 baseline: n = 3,335). (HRI ED Visits).	The next available year, 2023, heat-related emergency department visits totaled 4,392.
By June 30, 2025, stabilize the number of heat-related hospitalizations (2022 baseline: n = 1,155). (HRI hospitalizations).	The next available year, 2023, heat-related hospitalizations totaled 1,434.
By June 30, 2025, complete a baseline assessment of the AZ Heat Preparedness Network collaboration effectiveness using a third-party assessment tool.	In progress – ADHS is working with federal partners to develop a multidisciplinary team to design and implement an evaluation plan.

Performance measures provide a framework for tracking progress while recognizing that stabilization or reduction of heat-related illness and death occurs within the context of increasing heat exposure statewide. In several areas, performance trends reflect both improved surveillance and expanded service utilization, alongside continued environmental risk.

2025 Updated Performance Measure	2026 Status Update (January 2026)	2026 Updated Performance Measure
By June 30, 2026, make progress on 100% of strategies in the updated 2025 work plan.	Progress was made on all strategies.	By June 30, 2027, make progress on 100% of strategies in the updated 2026 work plan.
By June 30, 2026, increase the number of facilities reporting heat-related illnesses into the syndromic surveillance system.	91/98 facilities are reporting heat-related illnesses into the syndromic surveillance system.	By June 30, 2027, maintain or increase the number of facilities reporting heat-related illnesses into the syndromic surveillance system.
By June 30, 2026, stabilization of the number of heat-related emergency department visits. (HRI ED Visits).	Heat-related emergency department visits increased 20% from 2023 to 2024 (n = 5,285). 2025 data pending.	By June 30, 2027, decrease the number of heat-related emergency department visits. (HRI ED Visits).
By June 30, 2026, stabilization of the number of heat-related hospitalizations. (HRI hospitalizations).	Heat-related hospitalizations increased 10% from 2023 to 2024 (n = 1,578). 2025 data pending.	By June 30, 2027, decrease the number of heat-related hospitalizations.
By June 30, 2026, complete an evaluation plan and begin gathering baseline data.	On track for completion in 2026. Initial data collection complete; analysis is underway to identify 2027 priority enhancements.	By June 30, 2027, use evaluation findings to identify and implement at least three priority enhancements.



Statewide Heat Impacts

Heat-related mortality and illness have increased markedly over the past decade. While the highest numbers of cases occur in more populous counties, rates per population are highest in several rural and western counties, underscoring the need for regionally tailored strategies.

Older adults, males, individuals with substance use involvement, and people experiencing housing instability remain disproportionately affected. These patterns reinforce that heat risk is shaped not only by temperature, but by social, economic, and health-related factors.

While heat-related deaths showed a small decline from 2023 to 2024 (2023 n = 990; 2024 n = 997), despite record-breaking summer temperatures, emergency department visits increased by 20% (2023 n = 4,392; 2024 n = 5,285) and hospitalizations increased by 10% (2023 n = 1,434; 2024 n = 1,578). The fact that more Arizonans sought professional medical care in the same time period that deaths saw a small decline could be an early signal that the strategies and approaches such as prevention and education are working. More research and evaluation is needed to know for sure.

Encouragingly, heat-related emergency department visits and deaths both declined in 2025; the first year since 2020 that both metrics have trended downward together (HRI: 2024 n = 5285, 2025 n = 4770; Deaths: 2025 n = 667 [preliminary]). While more research is needed to determine if this represents a long-term stabilization, it suggests that targeted interventions may finally be gaining traction.

Despite these preliminary improvements, the broader trend in heat-related illnesses (HRI) still indicates that community-level exposure to extreme heat often outpaces prevention efforts. Even with the recent 2025 dip, the total number of visits remains nearly double what was recorded in 2020, highlighting a critical need to intensify upstream, proactive outreach. By leveraging evaluation assessments, engaging with experts in the field, and listening to our communities, ADHS and partners will continue to refine and prioritize strategies that have the highest impact on preventing heat-related illnesses and deaths.

Heat-related Deaths Drop for the Second Year in a Row

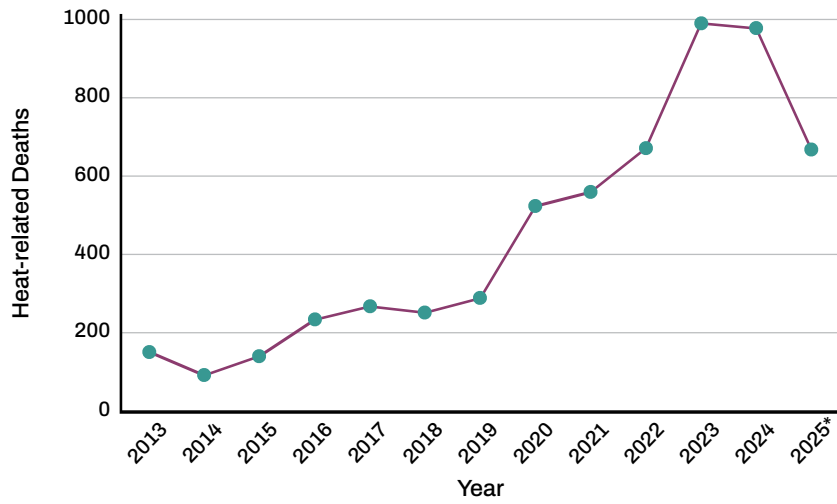


Figure 1: Heat-related Mortality in Arizona by Year (2013–2025*)
 (Source: Arizona Department of Health Services) *Preliminary

First Decline in ED Visits Since 2020

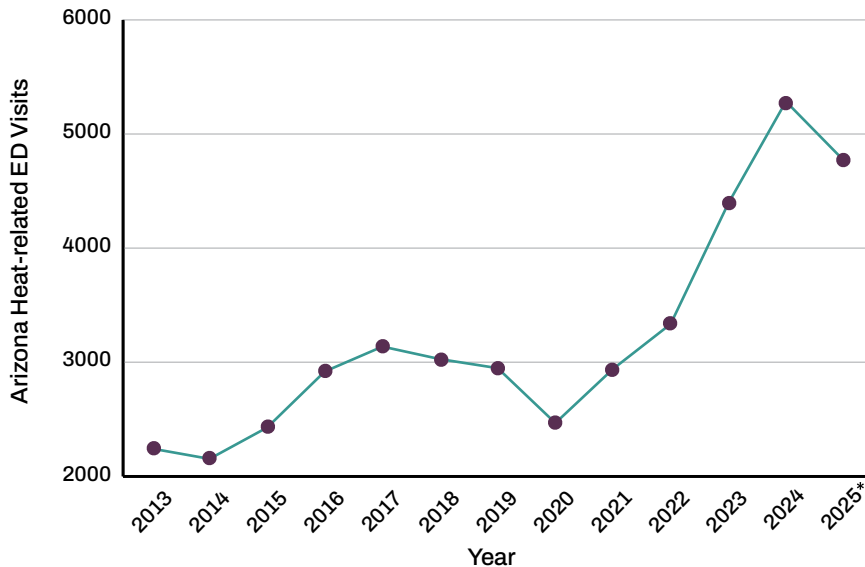


Figure 2: Arizona Heat-related Emergency Department (ED) Visits by Year (2013–2025*)
 (Source: Arizona Department of Health Services Syndromic) *Preliminary

For the first time since 2020, heat-related emergency department visits seemed to have declined in 2025.





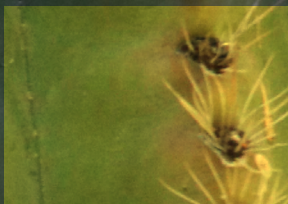
2025 Updates and Accomplishments



GOAL 1: Drive Heat Relief Activities

- Provided subject matter expertise on heat relief legislation and policy discussions.
- 3 requests submitted for federal funding support.
- Letters of support provided.
- 338 Extreme Heat Preparedness Members on Roundtable.
- 17 unique funding opportunities shared.
- 60% increase in Cooltainer utilization.

In 2025, the Arizona Department of Health Services (ADHS) operationalized statewide coordination. By strengthening leadership roles, including the continued strategic oversight of the nation’s first Chief Heat Officer, and fostering deep cross-agency collaboration, the state improved the bidirectional flow of information between leadership and community partners. Efforts this year focused on strategic engagement to align coordination before, during, and after heat events. Shared digital platforms were central to ensuring an informed, resilient, and unified response across the state.



Office actively advocated for reforms to the Stafford Act and drafted the Extreme Heat Emergency Act of 2025 that was introduced in the Senate and House (S.2331 and H.R.4497). A key milestone occurred in June 2025 with the establishment of the Long-Term Disaster Recovery Task Force. Managed by the Department of Emergency and Military Affairs (DEMA), the task force facilitated bi-monthly meetings to provide a framework for statewide recovery.

Data and Knowledge

Development: The Department of Insurance and Financial Institutions (DIFI), OOR, and DEMA started work toward adapting established methods to quantify the economic impact of extreme heat on lives and property. This initiative will provide the data-driven foundation necessary to inform policy initiatives, advance statewide resilience planning, and secure sustainable funding for heat mitigation.

The state government is taking active steps toward proactive heat management across sectors. This work is inherently collaborative among Arizona state agencies and remains an ongoing effort, requiring continuous integration of strategies to safeguard public health and economic productivity. As these programs develop, state agencies remain committed to data-driven decision-making and the ongoing refinement of the collective response to extreme heat events.

State Workgroup Meetings

The State of Arizona made progress in implementing long-term strategies to address the impacts of extreme heat. As of December 2025, progress was made in most priority areas, indicating a comprehensive approach that includes housing safety, emergency response modernization, and advanced data collection. The following section highlights current achievements and ongoing efforts to protect Arizonans from heat-related risks through strategic infrastructure and coordinated state-level support, as identified in [Arizona's Extreme Heat Preparedness Plan](#) (2024).

Safe and Affordable Housing: State initiatives focused on identifying workforce needs and ensuring reliable utility services through a preliminary assessment of workforce requirements for weatherization and energy efficiency, alongside the development of a formal Power and Water Service Plan.

Emergency Response: Efforts shifted toward institutionalizing heat preparedness through collaboration among various agencies. The Governor's

NATIONAL AND LOCAL LEADERSHIP

Throughout 2025, Arizona further demonstrated its position as a national leader in heat resilience through high-level engagements that bridged the gap between policy, clinical practice, and community action. By participating in prestigious national forums and local summits, the Chief Heat Officer, ADHS, and our partners shared evidence-based strategies developed over decades of frontline work in the Southwest. These leadership efforts focused on amplifying Arizona's proactive approach to extreme heat while fostering cross-sector collaborations, ranging from maternal health and lung safety to emergency healthcare response and academic research to drive impactful change and enhance community resilience. Below are the key engagements and collaborative milestones that defined Arizona's leadership role this year:

National Leadership and Federal Advocacy

- An Extreme Heat Roundtable Discussion | Senator Mark Kelly.
- Beating the Heat: A 2025 Heat Policy Agenda | Panel (Washington DC) | Environmental and Energy Study Institute (EESI) and Federation of American Scientists (FAS).
- Designing State Policy to Address Extreme Heat | 2025 Extreme Heat Summit | Center for Energy Poverty and Climate.
- French-American Innovation Days: Heat and Health | University of Arizona.
- Protecting Health from Extreme Heat – State Leadership in Action | American Public Health Association.

State-Level Coordination and Policy

- 3rd Annual Arizona Heat Summit | ADHS and Extreme Heat Preparedness Network.
- 2025 Arizona Heat Kickoff Event | ADHS, NOAA, UA, and ASU.
- Arizona Heat Awareness Week Press Conference | Governor Hobbs and ADHS.
- Building a Stronger Public Health System to

Respond to Extreme Heat & Other Challenges | 2025 Arizona State of Reform Health Policy Conference.

- Forging Arizona's Resilient Future | 2025 League of Arizona Cities and Towns Annual Conference.

Healthcare, Research, and Community Resilience

- Advancing Care and Prevention in an Era of Extreme Heat | 2025 Arizona Burn Symposium Burning Point | Arizona Burn Center & Valley-wide Health.
- AZ Community Grand Rounds: Mitigating Arizona's Heat-Related Health Risks | Blue Cross Blue Shield of Arizona and The NARBHA Institute.
- Heat, Air Quality and Lung Health for Healthcare Professionals | American Lung Association.
- Science and Medicine of Improving Human Resilience | 8th Annual reimagine Health Research Symposium | University of Arizona.
- Second Annual Southern Arizona Heat Summit | City of Tucson, University of Arizona, and Pima County.

Sustained Working Groups

- 10X Resilience Network Meetings | Arizona State University.
- All Members Meetings | Arizona Coalition for Healthcare Emergency Response (AzCHER).
- Arizona Heat Research & Data Workgroup Meetings | Arizona State University, Sustainable Cities Network.
- Arizona Local Health Officers Association (ALHOA) Meetings.
- 2026 Heat Walk Planning Meetings | Red Cross, Phoenix AZ Chapter.
- Extreme Weather & Health Action Network Meetings | STAT Network.
- Quarterly Urban Heat Island (UHI) Community of Practice Meetings.

Strategic Policy and Funding Alignment

In 2025, Arizona's Governor's [Office of Resiliency \(OOR\)](#) and the Arizona Department of Health Services (ADHS) leveraged the Legislative Strategic Outline to seek sustainable funding. With this unified approach, policy discussions with federal and state partners were directly tied to the state's most pressing resource gaps. Together, the state of Arizona secured legislative victories to build the state's long-term community resilience. Impactful legislative actions include the [Executive Order 2025-13](#), which established the [Arizona Energy Promise Task Force](#) to lower consumer energy costs, and the [Grid Resilience Grant Program](#), which awarded \$15.6 million to harden the power grid for more than 1.6 million customers.

The state's ongoing commitment is further reflected in the [FY 2027 Executive Budget](#), which proposes a landmark \$10 million one-time investment specifically to mitigate the public health effects of extreme heat. ADHS advised on the strategic allocation of these funds for priority areas such as cooling center operations, production of additional Cooltainers, development of heat-relief training, and a centralized statewide heat call center to streamline community assistance. Beyond state-level budgeting, Arizona pursued three strategic federal appropriations to further bolster local infrastructure with zero-match requirements. These include a \$2 million scoping project to identify permanent disaster relief centers, \$1 million to equip fire and EMS personnel with advanced cold-water immersion therapy skills, and \$1 million for operational grants to support roughly 100 local cooling sites.

ADHS also provided formal letters of support for several Extreme Heat Preparedness Network partners upon request. Key themes of the initiatives supported include:

- Strengthening disaster preparedness and response systems through maintaining the vital systems that provide accurate, timely data and community outreach.
- Enhancing cross-jurisdictional human service coordination.
- Community-driven resiliency strategies and protections for at-risk outdoor worker populations.

By aligning potential funding opportunities with the Legislative Strategic Outline, ADHS delivered consistent subject matter expertise to policymakers, reinforcing support for high-impact interventions asked for by communities. ADHS continues to offer letters of support, stay apprised of legislative movements pertaining to heat, and is poised to rapidly secure future federal grants to sustain Arizona's comprehensive heat-resiliency strategy.

A diverse coalition of state agencies supports Arizona's unified heat-response strategy:

Energy & Household Support: The OOR's [Efficiency Arizona Program](#) provides up to \$14,000 in rebates for heat pumps and weatherization. Simultaneously, the Arizona Department of Economic Security (ADES) manages the LIHEAP program, offering up to \$640 in cooling assistance and \$500 in crisis relief to prevent utility disconnections.

Urban Cooling & Forestry: The [Department of Forestry and Fire Management \(DFFM\)](#) awarded over \$1 million for urban tree canopy expansion and launched Green Campus Grants of up to \$40,000 to create sustainable green spaces at schools and healthcare facilities.

Water & Infrastructure: The [Water Infrastructure Finance Authority \(WIFA\)](#) provides grants up to \$2 million for rural water systems, while the [Department of Water Resources \(ADWR\)](#) funds the restoration of riparian areas to serve as natural cooling corridors.

Innovation: The [Arizona Commerce Authority \(ACA\)](#) uses its \$4 million Arizona Competes Fund to attract clean energy businesses and to pilot new sustainability solutions through programs such as Plug and Play accelerateAZ.

Workplace Safety: Statewide leadership reached a significant milestone when Governor Hobbs signed [Executive Order 2025-09](#), directing the Industrial Commission of Arizona (ICA) and ADOSH to form a Workplace Heat Safety Task Force. Arizona subject matter experts finalized and submitted the [Recommendations for Arizona Heat Illness Prevention](#) to the Industrial Commission in December 2025.

Expanded Utility Bill Assistance: In March 2026, Governor Katie Hobbs launched [PowerAZ](#), a \$15 million initiative administered by DES to provide utility bill assistance and energy efficiency appliance improvements for Arizona families that otherwise would not have been eligible through LIHEAP.



Statewide Coordination

STATE HEAT BRIEFING

To maintain real-time situational awareness, ADHS Bureau of Resiliency and the Environment (BRE) hosted the State Heat Briefing Meetings which convened twice-monthly from May through October 2025 to align with peak heat season response efforts. These briefings served as a novel space for strategic coordination and support between the community and state leadership. By leveraging the statewide heat point of contact directory, ADHS facilitated multi-sector and multi-jurisdictional collaboration among federal partners, Tribal nations, and local health officials. Each meeting featured National Weather Service (NWS) forecasts, state agency and partner updates; fostering a commitment to addressing the evolving threats of extreme heat.

Peer-to-peer learning became a staple of the meetings, highlighting partner achievements and showcasing innovative solutions across the state. Presentations featured Tribal public health innovations from the Tohono O’odham Nation and the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community. Other presentation topics explored targeted heat safety strategies, including doorstep education from the American Red Cross, trail safety from Arizona Parks and Trails, and negative interactions from heat exposure and substance use updates from the ADHS Opioid Prevention Program. Detailed meeting notes and shared resources were posted on the Civic Roundtable platform to encourage ongoing dialogue and maintain transparency across the Extreme Heat Preparedness space. The meetings will continue into the 2026 heat season.



What’s Inside a Heat Relief Kit?

- Sunscreen, hats, and sunglasses.
- Lip balm with SPF.
- Cooling towels.
- Electrolyte packets.
- Reusable water bottles.

Collaborative Resource Mobilization

State Heat Briefings directly facilitated critical service connections. For example, a partnership allowed Valley of the Sun United Way to supply a new cooling center in Gila County with emergency water and relief kits. Similarly, Yuma County leveraged these coordination channels to secure an Arizona Public Service (APS) grant for water procurement, demonstrating the power of collaborative resource mobilization in real time.

Throughout the season, ADHS remained deeply embedded in local response efforts by participating in Maricopa and Pima County’s Heat Relief Partner meetings. Following the summer peak, the agency participated in regional “hotwashes” and the Southern AZ Heat Summit to evaluate response effectiveness and identify critical focus areas for the 2026 season.

Capitol Mall Cooltainers

Operating from May 5 through October 15, 2025, solar-powered air-conditioned Cooltainers served as a vital community fixture at the Capitol Mall locations, offering a reliable safe haven from heat. Public utilization at these sites grew substantially, with attendance rising from 7,522 visitors in 2024 to nearly 12,000 in 2025. This 60% increase in visitations highlights the critical necessity of maintaining accessible, low-barrier cooling locations in high-traffic urban heat islands, particularly for local residents who travel less than two miles to reach these resources. While welcoming Arizonans of all ages, adults between the ages of 35–44

remained the most frequent visitors, and the program successfully expanded its reach to serve 393 veterans. Beyond providing a respite from the heat, these sites distribute heat safety educational materials and offer medical triage for those experiencing symptoms of heat exhaustion. For example, connecting visitors to 988 (the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline) and naloxone. To increase the availability of life-saving relief for residents in high-risk regions, the Governor’s Office and ADHS explored expanded funding and partnership options to bolster the statewide inventory.

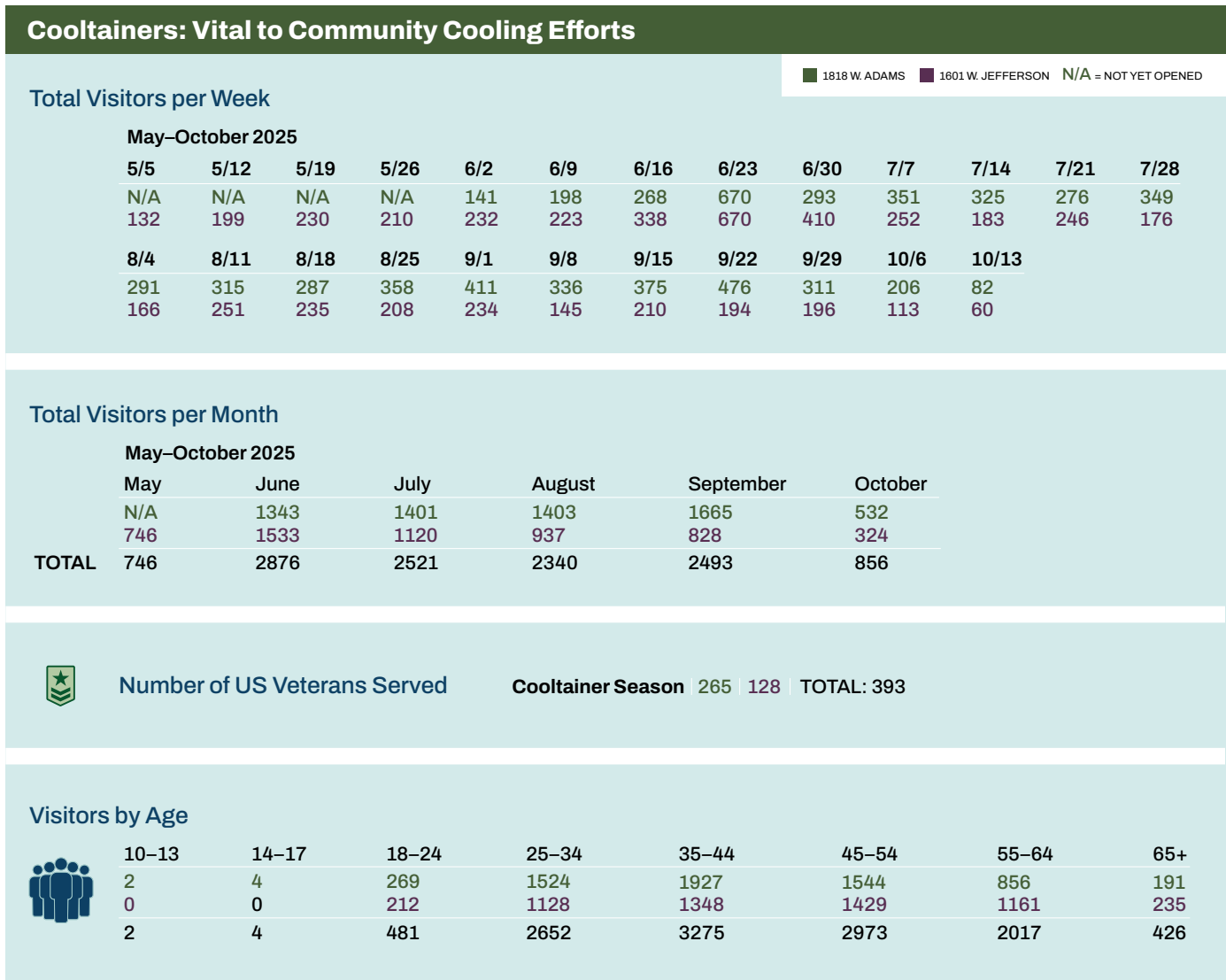


Figure 3: Capitol Mall Cooltainers Visitor Count (May–October 2025) (Source: Arizona Department of Administration and Arizona Department of Health Services)

Roundtable Engagement

The 2025 season marked a significant shift in how the Civic Roundtable platform was utilized as the primary connection hub for the Extreme Heat Preparedness Network; serving as a central repository for the statewide coordination of knowledge, events, meeting notes, and resources. The platform supported 338 registered members representing 178 unique organizations, streamlining the dissemination of 86 shared resources which garnered nearly 600 views and 111 downloads.

Beyond administrative coordination, the platform functioned as a vital bridge for maintaining open communication between federal, state, and local partners. It ensured that local efforts remained informed by broader statewide strategies while allowing federal and state

agencies to stay keenly aware of grassroots initiatives and local needs in real-time. This bi-directional flow of information was exemplified by the promotion of critical federal updates, such as the informal public hearing on OSHA's Proposed Rule for Heat Injury and Illness Prevention in Outdoor and Indoor Work Settings. The network also utilized the hub to circulate high-impact national research, including the United States Government Accountability Office (GAO) report on Extreme Heat, which underscored how limited FEMA assistance highlights a pressing need to reevaluate the federal role in heat response.

Knowledge exchange was further amplified through a robust schedule of shared community events and webinars. Partners collaborat-

IMPACT AND ENGAGEMENT METRICS

CIVIC ROUNDTABLE:

A standalone statewide knowledge and coordination platform.

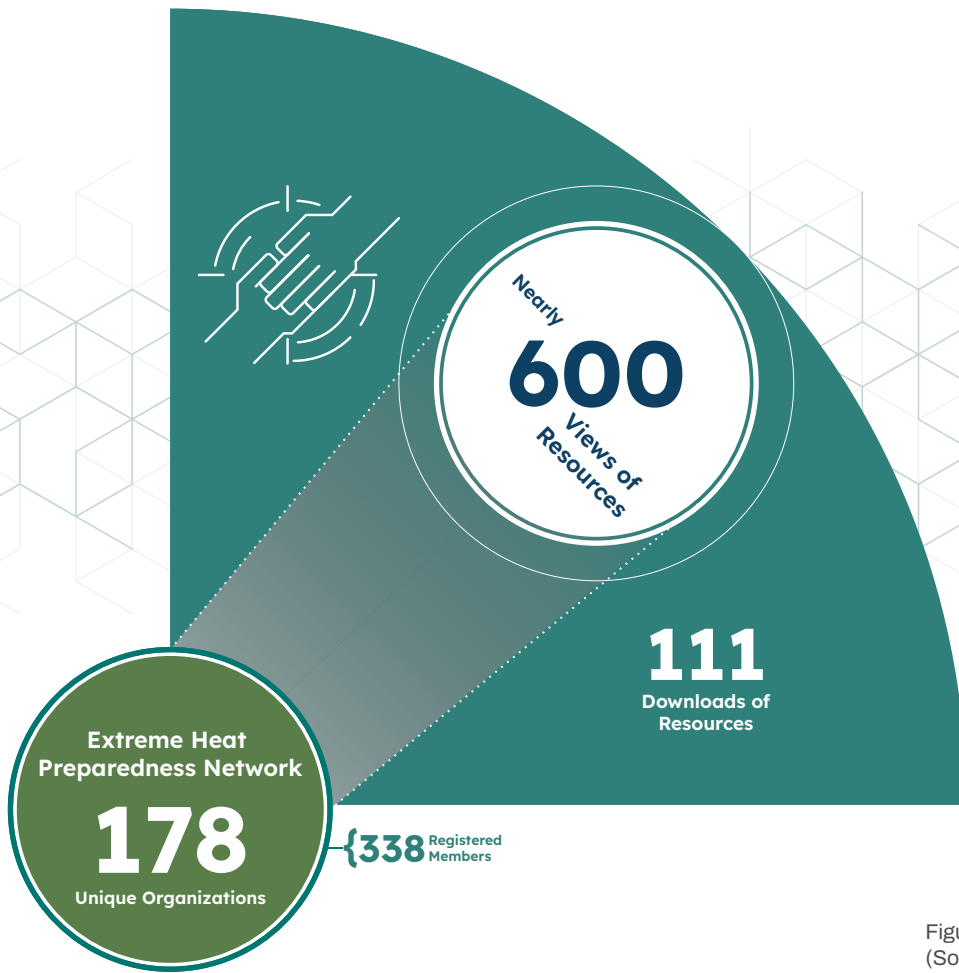


Figure 4: Civic Roundtable Engagement
(Source: Arizona Department of Health Services)

ed on broad heat topics ranging from federal workshops, such as the NOAA-NIHHS Heat User Engagement series, to specialized sessions like ASU’s “Extreme Heat and Drug-Related Risks.” These opportunities allowed the network to connect with local movements like the Arizona Climate Coalition and gain diverse perspectives through sessions such as the “Virtual Panel: Extreme Heat Adaptation in Indigenous Communities.”

Crucially, the platform acted as a hub for sharing 17 unique funding opportunities. ADHS proactively submitted a proposal for a FEMA Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) scoping project to determine the future of statewide resilience hubs, but due to federal changes, the funding was not available.

ADHS remains committed to seeking and promoting funding opportunities as they become available.

For the first time, the Maricopa County Heat Relief Network and Pima County Heat Network managed their own dedicated community spaces on the platform to coordinate response efforts in real time. County leaders utilized advanced features, such as SMS messaging and live announcements, to provide instant updates to heat relief site operators and local stakeholders. This centralized hub for the networks fostered streamlined communications and coordination, allowing the network to channel resources and safety information from the state and county to local stakeholders with greater precision.



GOAL 2: Reduce Heat-Related Illnesses and Deaths

- 14+ materials translated into Spanish.
- Bilingual heat safety video.
- Arizona Heat Relief Site Map new filter options.
- 600+ direct click-throughs from social media.
- 14 Tribal and county partners received heat relief items from BRE.

Reducing heat-related illness and death requires a synergy of timely data, coordinated response, and clear public communication. In 2025, ADHS leveraged its expanded syndromic surveillance system, which now includes 93% of the state's emergency departments (up from 91% last year), to detect emerging trends and target messaging to the state's most heat-sensitive groups.

**Throughout the season,
the agency’s unified slogan**

“Stay Cool,
Stay Hydrated,
Stay Informed,
and Stay Connected,”

served as a call to action.

The “Stay Connected” pillar was specifically amplified for older adults and commonly isolated at-risk groups to foster community, mutual support, and vigilance of care during extreme heat events.



DOWNLOAD

Don’t Overheat: Know Your Medications



Amplify Heat Safety Messaging: Direct Engagement

In 2025, ADHS prioritized direct engagement with community members through public forums and specialized educational events. By leveraging partnerships with “trusted messengers,” individuals and organizations already integrated into the daily lives of at-risk populations, critical prevention strategies were delivered where they were most likely to be adopted.

Older Adult and Caregivers

AARP invited ADHS and the American Red Cross to present heat safety preparedness tips during their town hall with over 1,600 participants. This event provided a dedicated platform for older adults and caregivers to engage directly with health experts, ask nuanced heat-safety questions, and receive direction toward local cooling resources.

Clinical Integration: “Know Your Medications”

The Heat and Medications Task Force engaged health-care providers and pharmacies as active amplifiers of a unified heat-safety message. This collaboration focuses specifically on how medications for common conditions can significantly alter a patient’s physiological response during high-temperature days.

During medical visits or prescription pickups, patients receive coordinated safety and hydration guidance supported by a new, plain-language informational flyer. Available digitally and in print (English and Spanish), this resource serves as a scalable tool for proactive patient education, addressing potential complications before they escalate into emergency department visits. Standardizing messages across products and platforms creates recognizable, actionable, and reliable guidance, eliminates conflicting information, and ensures Arizonans have a clear roadmap for heat safety and are empowered to manage their risks effectively.



Multimedia Education and Outreach

Building on the 1.1 million impressions recorded in the 2024 season, the 2025 social media strategy sought to maintain broad visibility while encouraging direct action. ADHS created and promoted 586 tagged posts, which generated 250,000 impressions, nearly 5,000 user engagements, and 620 click-throughs for more detailed information. With an engagement rate of 2.0%, heat-focused content significantly outperformed the 2025 general industry average of 1.5% and government sector average of 1.7%, indicating that Arizona audiences actively referred to ADHS for guidance to inform their safety behaviors.

Fan Direction

Actionable Infographics: A “fan direction” graphic emerged as a top performer, proving that simple, clear “how-to” content empowers residents to take immediate, low-cost steps to stay cool.

Urine Chart Guide

Visual Self-Assessment Tools: The high performance of the urine-color hydration chart demonstrated a strong public appetite for easy-to-understand tools that allow for personal health monitoring in the heat.

Heat Alerts

Timely Heat Alerts: Consistent with previous years, real-time alert posts drove the highest levels of visibility, confirming that the community continues to trust and rely on the agency for critical situational awareness.

Dog Safety Video

Relatable, Human-Centered Content: Relatable scenarios, such as the dog safety video with Jen, garnered high engagement by humanizing the risks of heat and making safety precautions more approachable for pet owners.

Tagged
Published
Posts

20

#HeatAlert

51

#HeatWeek

137

#HeatSafety

182

#Heat

196

#HeatAwareness

Tag Performance

JAN-NOV 2025

Total
Impressions
251,519

Total
Engagements
4,848



Total
Video
Views

11,868
#HeatAwareness

8,855
#HeatWeek

8,786
#Heat

8,855
#HeatSafety



Flyers and Tailored Guidance

Educational materials were updated or created with the most current information available to protect heat-sensitive populations and meet the diverse needs of communities. These flyers provide actionable guidance written in plain, non-technical language and are fully translated into Spanish. Developed with extensive partner and community input, these resources are widely accessible and promoted to the general public and heat response partners for co-branding.

Topics Include:

Extreme Heat Outdoor Events: Guidance for attendees to manage risks during high-temperature gatherings.

Heat and Medication Interactions: Information sheets for both healthcare providers and patients to address how specific substances can increase heat sensitivity.

Heat-Related Illness Prevention: Actionable steps and guidance for recognizing symptom progression from heat exhaustion to life-threatening heat stroke.

Safety Essentials: Resources covering “Look Before You Lock,” road trip heat safety tips, and sunscreen selection.

Hydration Awareness: The Urine Chart Guide and Stay Hydrated in the Heat flyers provide practical self-assessment tools for at-risk populations.

Community Support and Engagement: Dedicated materials for Heat Relief Donations and supporting local relief centers to bolster statewide infrastructure.

To further promote accessibility, ADHS published heat safety videos, offering comprehensive guidance in both [English](#) and [Spanish](#) via YouTube to reach audiences across various digital platforms.

Heat Safety Video





Heat Supplies: A Multi-divisional Response

In 2025, the agency utilized a cross-departmental strategy to expand the availability of life-saving heat-relief kits. By leveraging the unique expertise of key departmental divisions in the Arizona Department of Health Services, the agency provided diverse materials and promoted available items to local and community partners; reducing barriers. These efforts supported local response activities during periods of extreme heat and helped address resource gaps identified by partners.

The ADHS Bureau of Resiliency and the Environment (BRE) continued to provide support to local health jurisdictions. Nine Tribal Nations and five county health departments made use of ADHS' resources. Inventory expanded to include mats to prevent pavement burn and personal sun canopies, alongside traditional relief items.

11,850

servings of electrolytes.

2,000

cooling towels.

800

reusable water bottles.

4,900

bilingual (English/Spanish)
educational brochures.

150

mats to prevent
pavement burns.

120

portable sunshades
for unhoused and high-
exposure populations.

Heat Fatalities Recorded in Nearly Every County Over the Last Decade

2013–2024

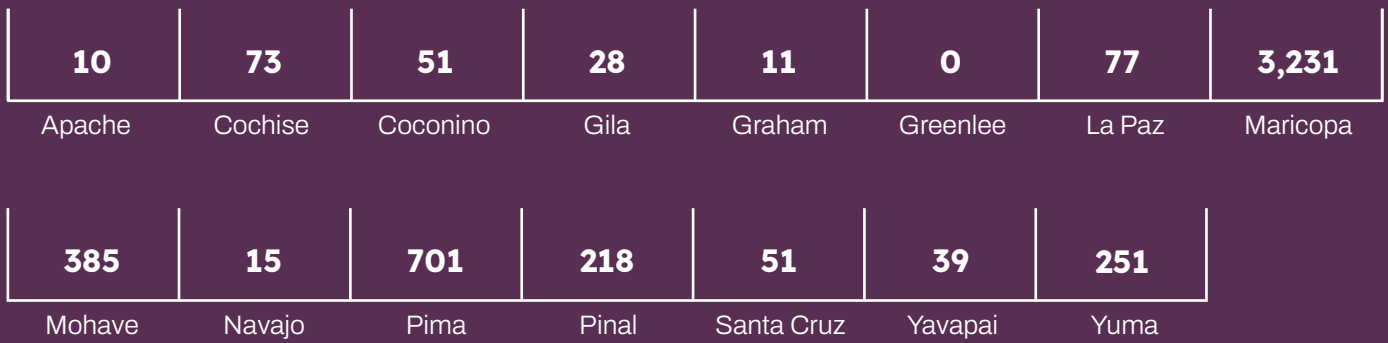


Figure 5: Heat-Related Deaths in Arizona by County (2013–2024) (Source: Arizona Department of Health Services)

Operational Insight

While distribution was extensive, demand significantly outpaced inventory. Many jurisdictions reported total depletion of high-request items like reusable water bottles and cooling towels. Notably, two health departments began the season without initial materials, underscoring a critical need for advanced procurement and “pre-season” stockpiling in future cycles.



Naloxone Partnership: Intersectional Safety

Recognizing the increased vulnerability of individuals with substance use disorders during extreme heat, ADHS strengthened cross-departmental partnership in 2025 with the Opioid Prevention Program. The program successfully distributed 10,000 cooling towels to public health offices statewide. Each towel featured integrated messaging that bridged heat-safety guidance with overdose prevention, directing users to a new, specialized [Overdose Prevention and Education Resources](#) webpage, transforming a simple relief item into a dual-purpose safety tool. This ensured that individuals seeking physical respite were simultaneously connected to a broader network of harm reduction and support services.



Another component to this partnership was promoting the availability of life-saving naloxone to local public health offices and directly to heat relief sites, which supported frontline organizations working with high-risk populations. Providing naloxone to reverse opioid overdose alongside hydration and cooling allowed for a more comprehensive approach, ensuring that Arizona’s response is as complex and adaptive as the challenges faced by its most vulnerable communities.

Evolving Heat Risks: The Growing Intersection of High Temps and Opioids and Other Substances

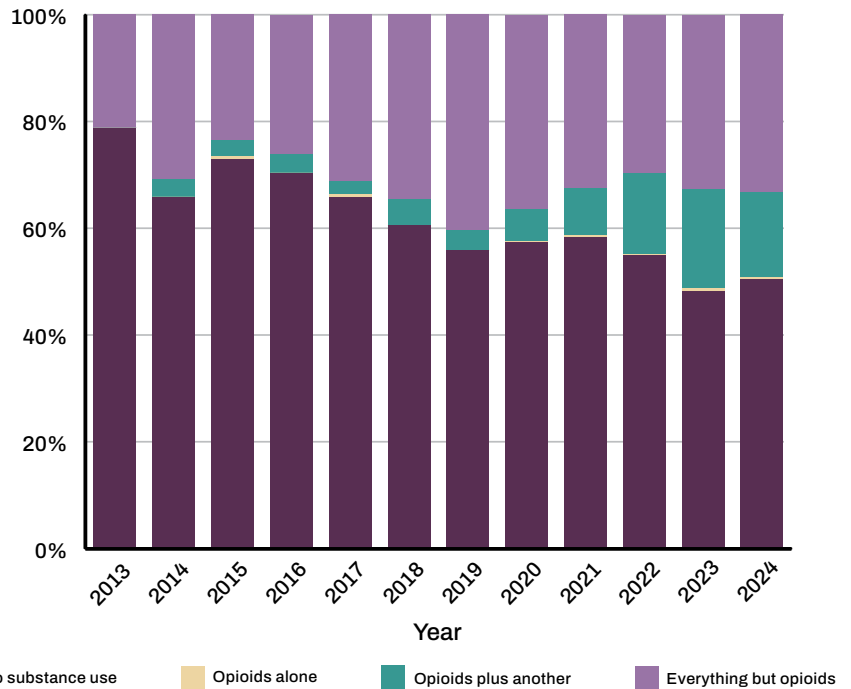


Figure 6: Heat-related Deaths in Arizona by Substance Use (2013–2024)
(Source: Arizona Department of Health Services Syndromic)

Removing Barriers to Seek Heat Relief: Mapping Redesigned

The [Arizona Heat Relief Site Map](#) redesign focused on reducing barriers that often prevent individuals from seeking assistance. Users can now utilize county-specific filtering to select from cooling, hydration, and respite centers, while simultaneously identifying which sites offer additional wrap-around human services, such as resource referrals, utility assistance, showers, clothing, and food. This integration addresses the multifaceted needs of diverse populations by streamlining access to support tailored to their unique needs within a single interface.

To further increase the likelihood of individuals entering a center, the redesign incorporates intentional filters for ADA-compliant locations, wheelchair access, and pet policies. These features directly address the anxieties that hinder service-seeking, such as the fear of being separated from a pet or service animal. In addition, enhanced mobile compatibility, navigation directions through Google for driving, walking, and biking, and real-time “Open Now” or “Closed” status icons make visiting a heat relief site expedient and less uncertain.

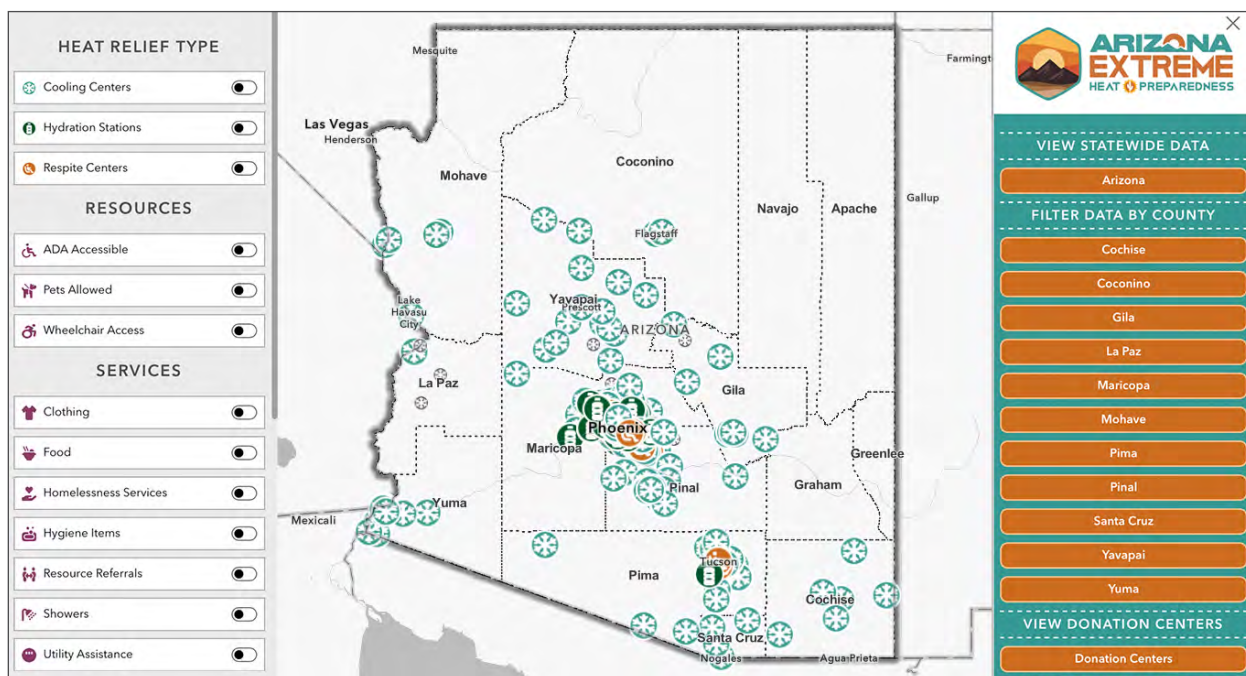


Figure 7: Arizona Heat-relief Site Map (Source: Arizona Department of Health Services)

GOAL 3: Prepare for Extreme Heat

48^{-hour}

Update frequency for the HRI dashboard (previously 2 weeks).

1,835

Heat Preparedness Network subscribers.

46,600+

Heat Alert subscribers.

22

Heat Alerts issued based on NWS notification.

1

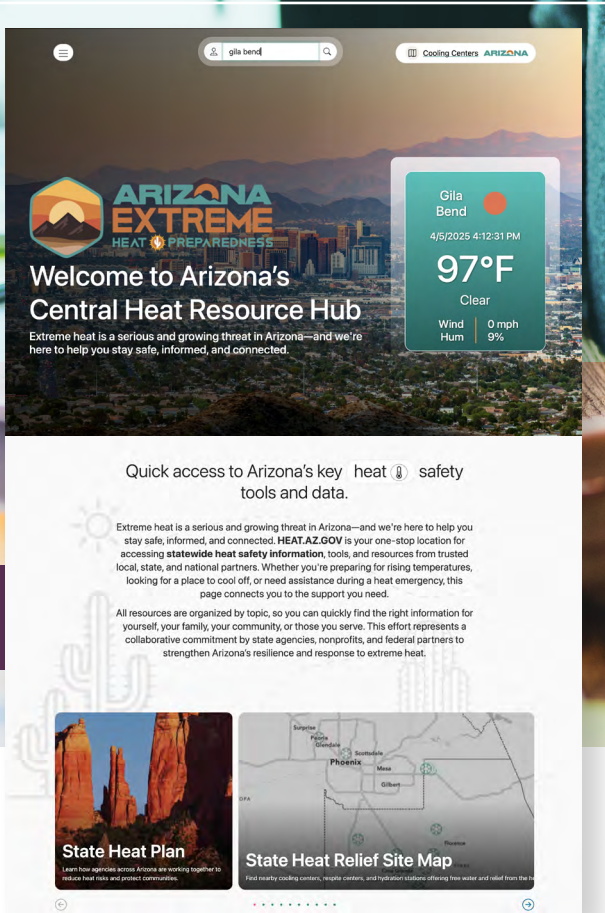
Centralized Heat Resource Hub launched.



Preparing for extreme heat is a strategic pillar that ensures Arizona's response remains proactive and coordinated. ADHS continued to apply the 'Data to Action' principle by strengthening the link between technical surveillance and operational readiness. This work serves as cross-cutting support for activities detailed throughout the report. Data-driven decision-making ensures that limited resources are directed toward the communities and interventions where they will have the greatest life-saving impact.

By providing partners with real-time situational awareness and standardized response frameworks, Goal 3 accomplishments further strengthen Arizona's

heat-health infrastructure and mobilize resources. Standing coordination meetings, such as the State Heat Briefings, served as a critical catalyst for a more unified and synchronized statewide heat response, especially when resources are taxed as heat seasons, begin earlier and extend later into the year. Preparedness efforts emphasized the potential for earlier activation, longer operational windows, and clearer response trigger communications. By refining tiered response frameworks and improving data availability for decision-making, ADHS supported local jurisdictions and communities to anticipate, mitigate, and respond.



Local Readiness

ADHS promoted the use of NWS HeatRisk and Climate Prediction tools to guide the decision-making for beginning season operations and opening Heat Relief Sites (HRS). Additional resources and tools were shared during the [2025 Arizona Heat Kickoff Event \(Event Recording, Slides, Questions and Answers, and Resources Shared\)](#). An overview of the resource request process was highlighted during the event to remove barriers for utilization. Local jurisdictions were provided with multiple channels to request essential and diverse heat materials throughout the summer.

A major milestone in statewide coordination was the expansion of the county and Tribal heat point of contact list. The directory now includes specialized roles such as GIS specialists, heat relief coordinators, and communication officers, ensuring technical expertise is integrated directly into the emergency response flow. It is updated throughout the year as roles change and is sent out for official review yearly.

Heat Deaths Persist Year-Round; July Remains the Deadliest

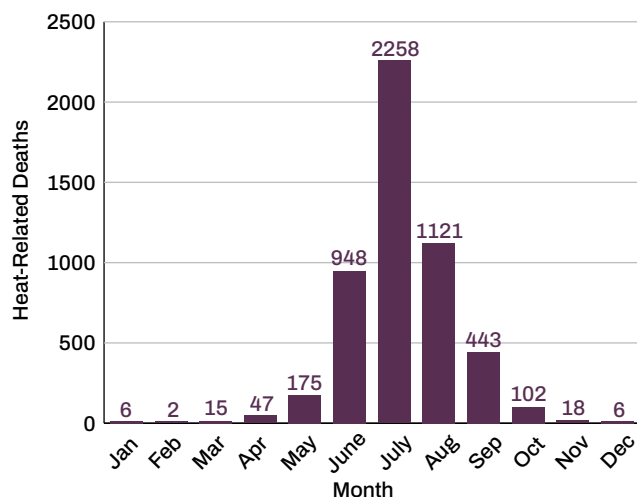


Figure 8: Arizona Heat-Related Deaths by Months (2013-2024)
(Source: Arizona Department of Health Services)



Situational Awareness: Heat Alerts

Public communication remained a primary pillar of safety throughout the 2025 season. To ensure the public and stakeholders remained informed of evolving risks, ADHS maintained a robust listserve of over 46,600 Heat Alert subscribers (general public + schools/child-care facilities). Based on direct survey feedback, alert summaries were reformatted to emphasize duration of the heat event and potential health impacts. The “Did You Know” narrative series was expanded to cover critical heat-safety topics, including:

- **Heat and Medications Interactions:** Guidance on how extreme heat interacts with common prescription medications, a critical area given that chronic conditions such as circulatory disorders are top comorbidities for heat-related illness.
- **Battery Care:** Vehicle and medical device battery maintenance and care during high temperatures.
- **Hydration Guidance:** ADHS shifted from complicated guidance on how much and when to drink toward a more straight forward approach. When and how much to drink depends on many factors including age, individual physiology, medical conditions, medication, environmental temperature, and activity level. A new urine chart guide was integrated into alerts to provide a simple, visual tool for individuals to monitor their hydration levels.

Arizona Heat Alert Season

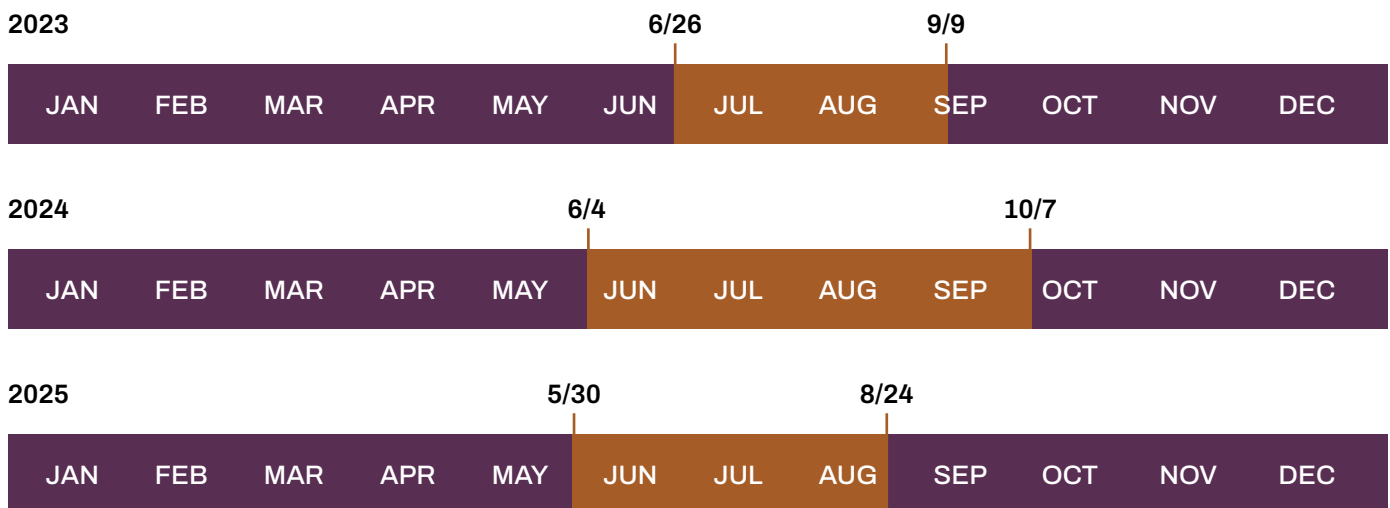


Figure 9: Heat Alerts, 2023–2025 (Source: Arizona Department of Health Services)



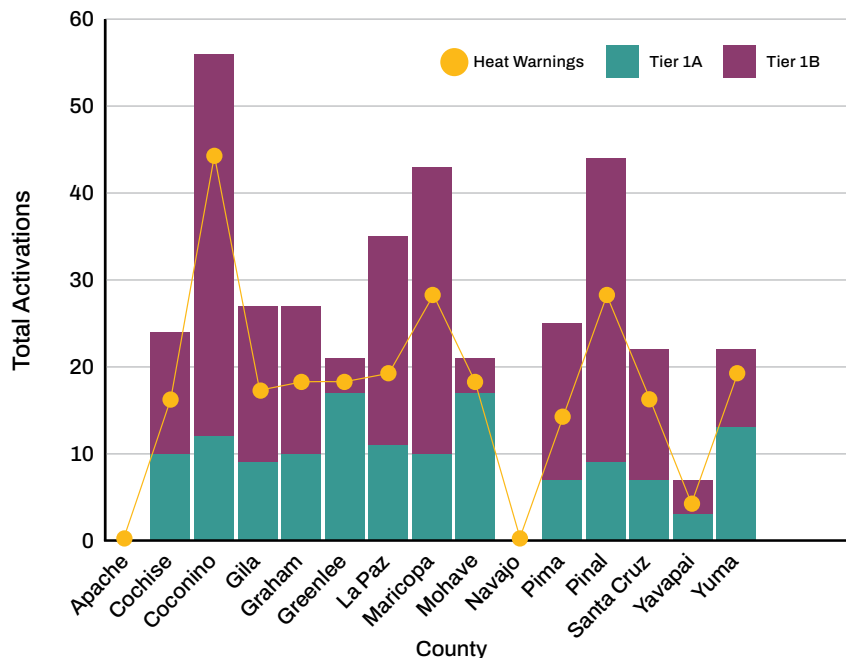
Heat Tier Notifications

The Arizona Heat Preparedness Network saw a significant growth in engagement, with subscribers increasing 25% from 1,461 in 2024 to 1,835 in 2025. Subscribers received 20 Heat Tier Updates and HeatRisk Outlook bulletins from the beginning of June throughout the month of August, sent twice weekly, which facilitated a response cadence that remained aligned with real-time data from the Heat Tier Dashboard. These notifications were further enhanced with translated Spanish-language content and expanded resource links. While the notification system successfully supported peak-season operations, a technical vendor issue from August through the end of the season temporarily disabled the Heat Tier dashboard and notification sequence. ADHS worked with the vendor to resolve these challenges, ensuring that the 2026 season benefits from a more resilient notification framework.

Heat Response Activation Tiers, Thresholds, and Activities

Evaluation of the Heat Response Activation Tiers, initially implemented in 2024, made progress as task force members assisted in developing and finalizing a feedback survey which was incorporated into each Heat Tier Notification email. The survey seeks to uphold the system's continued utility for partners as this remains an ADHS initiative and a Governor's priority to standardize heat response in Arizona.

Arizona Heat Warnings, Tier 1A, Tier 1B, and Total Activations



Pima County utilized heat warning tiers to trigger notifications for cooling centers, hospitals, and Network stakeholders, allowing them to prepare for surges in utilization based on validated data thresholds.

Figure 10: Heat Warnings, Tier 1A, Tier 1B, and Total Activations in 2025 (Source: Arizona Department of Health Services)



Data Access and Visibility

To better support rapid decision-making, ADHS upgraded the HRI dashboard from a bi-weekly to an every-other day schedule. This improvement resulted in faster data processing, the availability of more current figures better, and near real-time view of trends in Emergency Department (ED) visits, particularly during the summer. These improvements help ADHS and stakeholders more effectively monitor HRI trends, have a better understanding of current burden, and proactively address emerging heat risks.

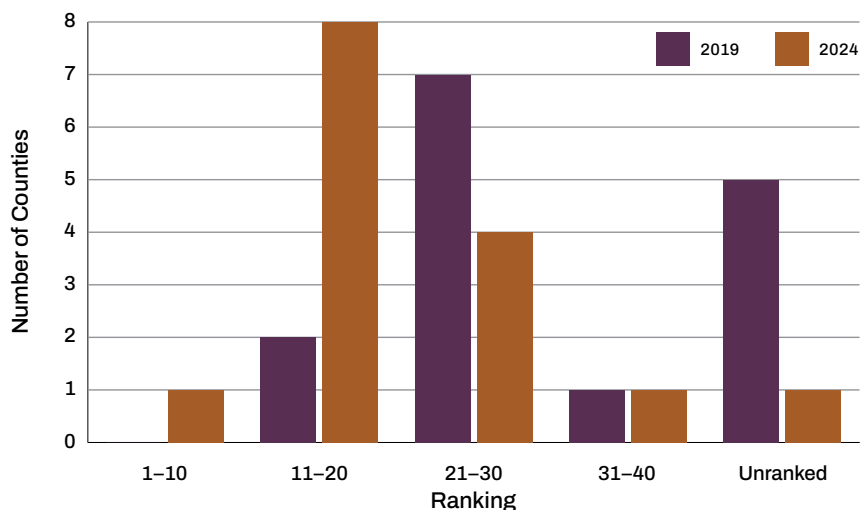
New Analytic Tools:

- **Heat Death Dashboard:** Developed to visualize historical data on heat-related fatalities from previous summers, this tool enables the tracking of mortality trends over time.
- **Heat Deaths Ranked as a Cause of Death:** New analyses placed heat among Arizona's top health-related causes of mortality; between 2019 and 2024, heat steadily climbed the rankings for leading cause of death across Arizona counties. By tracking where heat-related deaths fall on this list annually, ADHS can objectively measure whether heat is becoming a more prominent threat to public health relative to other major diseases and injuries.

Heat Research

To move research into practical field strategies, ASU Sustainable Cities Network, ADHS, U of A, City of Phoenix, City of Tempe, and NOAA host the [AZ Heat Research and Data Workgroup](#). These monthly, engaging webinars connect Arizona heat researchers with people working on broad heat initiatives. Each call highlights a specific research topic and provides an opportunity for interested individuals to ask questions, brainstorm future projects and potential applications, and work to translate academic research findings into life-saving protocols.

Arizona Heat Deaths Ranking Among Leading Causes of Death* (by County)



Total number of Arizona counties: 15
*Includes residents and nonresidents

Figure 11: Heat Deaths Ranked as a Cause of Death. Comparison of County Rankings Between 2019 and 2024 (Source: Arizona Department of Health Services)



Beyond Traditional Supplies

To jump-start long-term community resilience, ADHS and the Bureau of Operational Readiness and Response (BORR) completed a targeted distribution of surplus durable goods valued at over \$980,000. This high-impact collaboration moved beyond traditional supplies to provide partners with the heavy-duty infrastructure needed to sustain heat relief efforts. This one-time infusion of resources allows community organizations to pivot their future budgets toward direct service rather than equipment procurement.

On average, this initiative saved participating organizations nearly \$47,000 in operating costs, allowing local partners to reallocate funding toward their priority needs. After these items were announced early in the season during the State Heat Briefing, requesting pathways and reminders were promoted and could easily be shared or referenced on Civic Roundtable to the broad Extreme Heat Preparedness Network space and County Network spaces.

Inventory Highlights:

- **Medical and Clinical:** AED kits, pulse oximeters, thermometers, and first aid supplies.
- **Mobility and Care:** Wheelchairs, walkers, cots, mattresses, and linens.
- **Facility:** Cooling fans, emergency blankets, waste containers, and administrative tools (clipboards, storage).

Partner Impact Statements

“

The request and allocation process was straightforward, and we found it easy to access the supplies when we needed them most. We were able to distribute the supplies to individuals who were particularly vulnerable to the heat, which made a significant difference in their well-being.

”

– Unlimited Potential

“

We received a couple of mats and some pillows. Because our ministry has grown consistently over the summer, the extra mats and pillows were very valuable for the homeless to rest during the hot part of the day. At times, we had about 90 homeless trying to rest, and your gift was invaluable!

”

– Community House



Arizona’s Central Heat Resource Hub: [Heat.AZ.Gov](https://heat.az.gov)

In alignment with 2024 recommendations, ADHS launched [Heat.AZ.Gov](https://heat.az.gov). This centralized “Heat Resource Hub,” consolidates heat safety tools and commonly utilized state resources into a user-friendly platform, improving access to trusted information for both the public and partners. It is a critical tool for aligning Arizona-specific state resources and heat safety guidance. Users can utilize the site to find quick links to the Arizona Heat Relief Site Map, ADOSH workplace protections, Arizona Parks and Trails, and Office of Tourism main pages. The site also offers long-term support by connecting eligible households to financial assistance programs like the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) and weatherization services to improve home cooling efficiency. The website empowers Arizonans to make informed decisions and access the specific community resources they need to stay safe during the state’s extreme summer months.

Heat.AZ.Gov

Connects eligible households to financial assistance programs like the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP).



Empowers Arizonans to access the specific community resources they need to stay safe during the state’s extreme summer months.



415+

Heat relief sites across Arizona were indicated on the Arizona Heat Relief Site Count Dashboard.

Statewide Heat-Relief Mapping and GIS Enhancements

ADHS and the GIS Task Force implemented several high-visibility tools designed to convert complex metrics into operational transparency. Addressing the increased demand for information from media and Public Information Officers (PIOs), the department launched an Arizona Heat Relief Site Count Dashboard, providing a live view of the distribution of over 415 heat relief sites across Arizona. At the heart of this data-driven framework is the operationalization of the [Heat Relief Site Onboarding Survey](#). The foundation of this statewide onboarding survey was developed by leveraging the established models in Maricopa and Pima Counties. This effort creates a unified statewide language and standardizes these local successes into common categories for site categorization, such as cooling centers, hydration stations, and respite centers.

By integrating local GIS layers from the Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG), Pima, and Yuma Counties in 2025, the map now allows city planners and the GIS Task Force to strategically prioritize resources for high-need areas. This unified source of information empowers resource connectors like 211 to guide callers to services beyond heat relief, such as showers, resource referrals, or food assistance, with ease. These instrumental updates are the foundational beginnings to chart and present a real-time comprehensive network map of Arizona's heat relief infrastructure.

✓ Standardizing site data is the key to unlocking major features like real-time mapping and Google Maps integration. While 2025 served as the [Heat Relief Site Onboarding Survey](#)'s introductory year, ADHS recognizes the administrative effort required to adopt new tools. In 2026, ADHS is prioritizing direct technical consultations to support counties in migrating their successful local data into this unified statewide framework.



GOAL 4: Foster Innovative Solutions

- 5/15 Arizona counties actively participated in standardized heat-related mortality reporting protocols.
- Increased representation from 80 to 178 unique organizations in Civic Roundtable.
- Listening sessions were held with three distinct populations.

Innovation drives the evolution of Arizona’s heat-resiliency framework and serves as another strategic pillar that informs the other three goals. Through targeted pilot projects, ADHS explores emerging technologies and service models to bridge gaps in cooling access and resource delivery. This iterative approach allows the department to navigate operational challenges in real time, ensuring that future work is built on a foundation of proven sustainability and measured impact.



Community Lifelines

The Department of Emergency and Military Affairs (DEMA) has advanced heat response by incorporating “Community Lifelines” into a real-time Common Operating Picture (COP). This innovative dashboard provides an immediate overview of essential service stability, tracking critical data such as power outages from state utility partners, ongoing wildfire incidents, and the status of open shelters or cooling centers, and more. By monitoring these lifelines alongside forecasts from the National Weather Service, state agencies can proactively identify infrastructure risks and prioritize resource allocation to support Arizona’s most vulnerable residents during extreme heat events.

Cooltainers: Modular Resilience

The success of the Capitol Mall Cooltainers, modular cooling units repurposed from shipping containers, has generated significant interest from jurisdictions seeking scalable, innovative cooling solutions. The 2025 season demonstrated their unique versatility, evolving beyond fixed community cooling sites into critical tools for emergency adaptability. This was exemplified during the Bravo Fires, where two Cooltainers were offered to provide a climate-controlled community lifeline for first responders and residents displaced by heat-exacerbated wildfire activity. These solar-powered units offer a reliable, semi-mobile solution that can be activated within a single day during emergencies, ensuring that even in high-stress disaster scenarios, heat relief remains accessible.



Expanding the Network: Strategic Partnerships

Arizona’s heat resilience infrastructure was further fortified through a series of new and expanded public-private collaborations. By engaging a diverse network of non-governmental organizations, academic institutions, and private partners, the broader heat network expanded its capacity to support historically underserved populations, including those in rural areas, Tribal nations, and individuals experiencing housing instability. These partnerships bridge the gap between academic research and community-level application and maximize each entity’s unique reach to deliver safety resources where they are most needed.

- **American Red Cross:** Conducted focused canvassing in mobile home communities to distribute safety kits and educational materials with local social service connections.
- **Americares:** Connected state partners to the Climate Resilience for Frontline Clinics Toolkit: Extreme Heat, providing local health centers with evidence-based strategies to manage heat-related health risks for patients, providers, administrators, and communities.
- **Habitat for Humanity:** Explored long-term housing resilience through air conditioning unit repair loans and weatherization services for low-income homeowners.
- **Manufactured Home Outreach:** ADHS served as a convener, bringing together community leaders and partners who coordinated resident-centered heat outreach and neighborhood canvassing. This facilitation helped align stakeholder efforts to address the unique resource needs of manufactured home communities and continues to support the development of best practices and implementation guidance.
- **Soles 4 Souls:** Partnered on shoe distribution to unhoused populations, specifically aiming to reduce the high incidence of severe pavement burns caused by ground temperatures.
- **Utility Integration:** ADHS partners with utility companies to expand awareness around available resources during service interruptions. For example, Salt River Project (SRP) points to the ADHS heat relief map on their outage site, and Tucson Electric Power (TEP) provides links to local heat relief sites in a banner on their page during prolonged outages. In a major step for improved regional coordination in 2025, Arizona Public Service integrated the Arizona Heat Relief Site Map directly onto its power outage map. Customers experiencing power failures can seamlessly locate the nearest cooling or respite center.

Heat + Medication Task Force:

A joint effort with the University of Arizona to address the clinical risks of extreme heat on certain medications and substances. The task force launched a pilot project with Genoa Pharmacy to test outreach strategy effectiveness and released an updated medication list, in English and Spanish, to help healthcare providers identify patients most susceptible to heat-related illness based on pre-existing conditions.



DOWNLOAD
Heat & Medications
Information for Health
Care Providers

Refined Reporting



ADHS continues to work closely with all OMEs and county public health offices to refine the reporting of heat-related fatalities.

Standardizing Arizona Heat Mortality Reporting

Between August and November 2024, ADHS conducted five listening sessions with the Office of the Medical Examiners (OMEs) and public health representatives from Coconino, Maricopa, Pima, Pinal, and Yuma Counties. The sessions sought to establish a baseline for state-level heat-related death data and identify opportunities for improved coordination, standardization, and resource allocation. OMEs reached a consensus on four priority areas to improve public health interventions and policy development:

1. **Unified Data Systems:** Develop a standardized, state-level electronic platform to ensure seamless data interoperability between all counties and ADHS.
2. **Standardized Definitions:** Establish clear, statewide protocols for reporting key variables (e.g., housing status, AC status, and comorbidity factors).
3. **Resource Support:** Address funding and staffing gaps for epidemiologists and data analysts by pursuing targeted grants (e.g., Building Resilience Against Climate Effects (BRACE)-style funding).
4. **Enhanced Collaboration:** Form a permanent task force of OMEs and public health representatives to share best practices and integrate death data with other indicators, such as power outage logs and 911 call volume.



Amplifying Missing Voices

Innovation in heat resilience is not solely defined by new technology; it is driven by the social innovation of inclusive planning. In 2025, ADHS prioritized bridging the gap between policy and lived experience through dedicated listening sessions to ensure that all voices in Arizona are not just “considered” but are represented in the state’s preparedness strategies.

The 2025 Disability Community Listening Session

On February 7, 2025, ADHS and the Arizona Statewide Independent Living Council (AZSILC) convened a high-impact listening session to address the unique challenges extreme heat poses to individuals with disabilities. The event saw strong engagement, with 65 registered participants representing over 10 advocacy and service groups. For many Arizonans with disabilities, extreme heat is an infrastructure-level threat rather than a simple weather event. Participants identified several life-threatening vulnerabilities:

- **Power Dependency:** A primary concern is the reliance on power-dependent medical equipment, such as ventilators and electric wheelchairs. Unreliable communication from utility providers regarding shutoffs leaves these individuals without adequate preparation time.
- **Physiological Sensitivity:** Certain health conditions and medications can increase heat sensitivity at temperatures as low as 75° - 80°F.
- **Temperature Regulation:** Disabilities often hinder the body’s natural ability to regulate internal temperature, significantly raising the risk of heat exhaustion, hyperthermia, and rhabdomyolysis.
- **Invisible Risks:** Neurodiverse conditions and chronic illnesses are frequently overlooked in standard emergency planning, leading to hidden risks that are not immediately visible to first responders.



DOWNLOAD

Accessible Heat Relief Sites in Arizona for People with Disabilities

This resource was created in partnership with AZSILC to provide local site operators with actionable guidance for ADA standards and communication best practices. While this framework addresses immediate needs, it also serves as a foundational blueprint for our future efforts. Recognizing that the path to full accessibility is an ongoing journey, this collaborative model positions ADHS and its stakeholders to move beyond cooling sites to support broader statewide inclusivity efforts.



Heat Experiences in Rural and Tribal Communities

The University of Arizona (U of A) Southwest Center on Resilience for Climate Change and Health (SCORCH) and ADHS coordinated a series of Rural and Tribal Heat Listening Sessions to inform statewide heat response strategies. By meeting people where they are, these sessions captured local experiences from community leaders and residents to better understand regional heat risks and response needs.

The collaboration between ADHS, SCORCH, and the State Office of Rural Health focused on identifying actionable, strategic opportunities for resource sharing. By exchanging ideas on regional best practices and addressing unique challenges such as, geographic isolation and infrastructure limitations, participants helped define the specific support needed for building long-term resilience.

Listening sessions were conducted across diverse geographic regions to ensure a comprehensive view of Arizona's rural heat landscape:

- **A Dedicated Tribal Listening Session:** Held at the 3rd Annual Arizona Heat Summit to ensure Indigenous voices are central to statewide extreme heat planning.
- **Regional Sites:** Sessions were held in Parker (La Paz), Benson (Cochise), Sedona (Northern Arizona), and Somerton (Yuma).



Read the Full Summary of Findings

[Strategies and Recommendations for Heat Relief in Rural and Tribal Communities Across Arizona](#)



Summarized List of Products Created and Resources Available

Goal 1

- State heat briefing meetings and notes available on Civic Roundtable.
- County Heat Relief Network specific community spaces, led by county managers.
- Funding opportunities promoted on Civic Roundtable.
- Federal and state legislative updates and news shared on Civic Roundtable for broad partner engagement and awareness.
- Maintained Heat Contact List (internal use only).

Goal 2

Heat-risk Indicator Similar to Wildfire:

- Your Action Guide to Understanding Heat Risk (English/Spanish).

Bilingual Flyers:

- [Extreme heat outdoor event: Guidance for attendees](#) ([Guía de calor extremo para asistentes a eventos al aire libre](#)).
- [Don't overheat: know your medications](#) ([Evite sobrecalentarse: Conozca sus medicinas](#)).
- [Heat and medications information sheet for health care providers](#) ([Hoja de información y medicamentos para proveedores de atención médica](#)).
- [Heat relief donations](#) ([Donaciones para alivio del calor](#)).
- [Heat exhaustion and heat stroke](#) ([Agotamiento por calor y golpe de calor](#)).
- [Look before you lock](#) ([Mire antes de cerrar el carro](#)).
- [Road trip heat safety tips](#) ([Consejos de seguridad para viajar en el calor](#)).
- [Stages of heat illness](#) (Etapas de las enfermedades causadas por el calor).
- [Stay hydrated in the heat](#) ([Manténgase hidratado en el calor](#)).
- [Sunscreen selection tips](#) ([Consejos sobre el protector solar](#)).
- [Support local heat relief](#) ([Apoye los centros locales de alivio del calor](#)).
- [Urine chart guide to hydration](#) ([Guía de hidratación por el color de la orina](#)).

Heat Safety Videos ([AZDHS.Gov/Heat](#)):

- [English](#).
- [Spanish](#).

Connections to wrap-around services through the Arizona Heat Relief Site Map

Toolkits:

- [Emergency Preparedness, Heat Mitigation Tool Kit for Long-Term Care](#) (partnership to update).
- Extreme Heat Outdoor Event Toolkit (in publication).

[Accessible Heat Relief Sites in Arizona: for People with Disabilities.](#)

Goal 3

- Arizona Heat Relief Site Count Dashboard.
- Enhanced GIS features on the Arizona Heat Relief Site Map.
- Published and promoted the [Arizona Heat Relief Site Onboarding Survey](#) for locations outside Maricopa and Pima Counties.
- Continued maintenance and refinement of the centralized landing page for statewide heat resources: [Heat.AZ.Gov](#).

Goal 4

- Continued use of Civic Roundtable as a centralized portal for information and resource sharing.
- Disability Community Listening Session: [Event Report Out](#) and [Post-Event Survey Results](#).
- ADHS and OME Heat-Related Death Data Listening Session Summary Notes.



Focus for 2026

Arizona's Roadmap for Public Health and Extreme Heat



Approach

Looking ahead to 2026, Arizona will drive progress toward a resilient future through an adaptable, data-driven roadmap. This approach integrates policy advocacy and academic research with localized, boots-on-the-ground coordination.

Building on the success of the Civic Roundtable platform, ADHS will continue to connect and collaborate within this space to align stakeholder efforts and promote statewide heat resilience. By refining our approach, critical statewide initiatives outlined in 2024 and 2025 will maintain responsiveness to the current needs of the evolving landscape.

To sustain the momentum from the last two years and further improve Arizona's work to reduce heat-related illness and death, ADHS will prioritize refining communications in sensitive populations, advancing data- and community-informed feedback, and seeking diverse funding opportunities to capitalize on shared expertise and maximize impact without duplicating work or over-burdening our partners.

Extreme heat remains a defining public health challenge. However, building on the success of state-led situational awareness, cross-sector partnerships, and the expansion of diverse heat relief resources, Arizona is prepared to make significant, measurable strides in reducing heat-related illnesses and deaths.

GOAL 1: Drive Heat Relief Activities

GOAL 2: Reduce Heat-Related Illnesses and Deaths



Proposed Deliverables

- High-impact State Agency updates consistently provided during the [State Heat Briefing Meeting](#).
- Aligned data collection and visitor surveys of heat-relief sites, such as the [Capitol Mall Cool-tainers](#), across the state and aided in informing policy and grant funding.
- ADHS participation in external partner stakeholder meetings.
- Targeted distribution and use of available funding.



Proposed Deliverables

- Shared network map to help chart the organizations and services supporting heat relief.
- English and Spanish social media messages promoted.
- Identified needs, gaps, and best practices for cooling environments tailored for families, highlighting “shovel-ready” opportunities.
- Updated school heat guidance document and tools.

GOAL 3: Prepare for Extreme Heat

GOAL 4: Foster Innovative Solutions



Proposed Deliverables

- Expanded visualization and reporting elements for statewide heat-related illness and mortality data.
- Increased utilization of the Arizona Heat Relief Site Onboarding Survey for locations outside Maricopa and Pima Counties.



Proposed Deliverables

- Statewide heat-health knowledge exchange, featuring a centralized repository of research summaries, literature, and partner presentations.
- Innovation spotlights, highlighting successful heat relief interventions and scalable “bright spots” from across the state.



Community Reflections | Collective Actions

Summary of Community Input from the **2025 Arizona Heat Summit**



The morning began with a warm welcome and a chance to hear directly from state leaders. Speakers from the Governor’s Office of Resiliency and state health services opened the day by sharing how Arizona is navigating the challenges of extreme heat through shared data and collaborative action. Experts from the National Weather Service then provided a review of summer 2025, recent climate trends, and tools such as HeatRisk.

The conversation then moved deeper into the heart of our local neighborhoods and cities. County and city leaders shared what they were seeing on the ground. They took a deep dive into heat-related illness and death statistics and talked about the creative work being done to make streets and local spaces more comfortable for everyone. To bring the focus back to our own front doors, the state agency established to represent residential utility customers closed out the morning session by highlighting their role as a consumer advocate. They discussed their ongoing work to ensure that utility rates remain affordable and that essential programs, such as summer disconnection moratoriums, remain in place to protect families who depend on utility service during periods of extreme heat.

During lunch, the focus shifted to ways the community could stay involved beyond the summit. Speakers presented upcoming opportunities to participate in evaluation efforts to measure the success of collaborative heat safety work. Attendees were also invited to engage with a multi-institutional workgroup dedicated to heat research and data, where they could suggest future presentation topics and identified specific community research or data needs. Finally, the discussion broadened to the national level, providing a look at federal policy and the current climate around heat resiliency at the federal level.

Throughout the afternoon, the summit served as a hub for connection and collaborative problem-solving. Attendees engaged in interactive table discussions and roundtables where local responders and community volunteers sat alongside university researchers to brainstorm real-world safety strategies. These conversations covered a wide range of topics, from immediate emergency response to long-term planning for heat-ready schools.

A vital part of the day was dedicated to a panel of Tribal leaders and health specialists. This session offered a meaningful opportunity to learn from the unique experiences and leadership of Indigenous communities in preventing heat-related illness and promoting resilience among their relatives.

The event concluded with high-energy, rapid-fire presentations that highlighted specific community needs. These briefings touched on important safety measures for outdoor workers, the health impacts of extreme heat, and the specific challenges faced by those living in manufactured housing. By blending state policy insights with academic research and grassroots advocacy, the summit provided an inclusive space for every voice to help shape the road ahead.

Summary of Summit Attendees	
Number of Individuals Registered	256
Number of Agencies/Organizations Registered	130
Academic	55
City/County	59
Federal	9
Local (Community-Based Organizations or Non-profit Organizations)	45
Private Sector	19
State	47
Tribes	13
Utilities	9

Morning Presentations

Speakers' slides are posted online on our Arizona Heat Preparedness Events page and Civic Roundtable, our collaboration platform.

Focused Presentations

- Governor's Office of Resiliency.
- Arizona Department of Health Services.
- National Weather Service.
- Maricopa County Department of Public Health, Chief Medical Officer.
- Phoenix Heat Response and Mitigation.
- Pima County Department of Public Health.
- City of Tucson.
- Arizona Residential Utility Consumer Office (RUCO).

Breakout Sessions

- Academia, Data, Clinical.
- Response and Coordination.
- State and Local Leadership.
- Tribal and Rural Heat Experiences.

Table Discussions Activity

- Phoenix Fire.
- Arizona Climate & Health (UA).
- Sustainable Cities Network & Project Cities Program (ASU).
- Red Cross.
- Arizona Statewide Independent Living Council (AZSILC).
- Roundtable.
- ASU Heat Ready Schools.

Lunch Speakers

- Community Alliance.
- Arizona State University, Sustainable Cities.
- Federation of American Scientists.

Tribal Panel

- Pima County Health Department Tribal Liaison.
- Arizona Department of Health Services Tribal Health Epidemiologist.
- Maricopa County Department of Public Health Tribal Liaison.

Rapid-Fire Presentations

- Heat Ready Schools.
- Arizona Association of Manufactured Home Owners.
- AZ Burn Center.
- Arizona Division of Occupational Safety and Health.

The following is a summary of the insights, perspectives, and ideas shared by attendees during the summit. It reflects their collective input and does not necessarily represent the views or positions of ADHS or the State of Arizona.

Breakout Sessions

STATE AND LOCAL LEADERSHIP BREAKOUT SESSION

This outlines the key findings and recommendations from the recent leadership breakout sessions. The discussions focused on two primary pillars: improving the sharing of public health data and optimizing resource mobilization and funding strategies, particularly for vulnerable populations.

Topic 1: Sharing Public Health Data

Participants identified a critical need for a more integrated, transparent, and standardized data ecosystem to drive policy and response.

Infrastructure and Access

- **Centralized Reporting:** Participants advocated for a single dashboard and a unified data reporting mechanism to streamline information flow.
- **Broad Accessibility:** Data access should extend to multi-jurisdictional frontline agencies, including Law Enforcement, Fire, and EMS.
- **Innovative Tools:** Suggestions included developing a crowdsourcing application to gather real-time data.
- **Current Gaps:** While systems like EMResource exist, reporting is often voluntary, leading to incomplete datasets. EMS data specifically remains difficult for public health departments and the public to access.

Governance and Policy

- **National Standards:** There is a strong push for national policy to clarify HIPAA and PII (Personally Identifiable Information) constraints.
- **Legal Frameworks:** To overcome current barriers, groups recommended the aggressive use of MOUs, DUAs, and MOAs.
- **Coordination:** Information flow must be formalized from the City to the County, State, and Federal levels to ensure data-driven policy decisions.

Topic 2: Resource Mobilization & Funding

Discussions centered on removing bureaucratic hurdles and addressing the specific needs of unhoused individuals, seniors, and veterans.

Financial Process Improvements

- **Accounting Revisions:** State and local accounting manuals require revisions to eliminate “inhibitive” funding pass-down barriers.
- **Agility:** The objective is to move toward ready-to-go documentation that enables rapid funding implementation.

Community-specific Interventions

- **Utility Equity:** A significant portion of the discussion focused on mobile home parks and master-metered communities. Residents often face unexpected bills and lack awareness of true utility costs.
- **Direct Billing Advocacy:** Moving toward direct billing for electric and water services was identified as a way to benefit both residents and owners while freeing up resident income for other needs.
- **Volunteer Focus:** Strategies should leverage senior and unhoused volunteers to support year-round response efforts.

Response and Coordination Breakout Session Findings

This summary captures the findings of a collaborative session involving state, county, city, and community stakeholders. From a public health perspective, the session aimed to map the current statewide heat response system to identify coordination gaps, standardize nomenclature, and streamline resource distribution to mitigate heat-related illness (HRI) and mortality.

Poster 1: Heat Response Timeline and Activation Triggers

The coordination of heat response in Arizona follows a distinct seasonal cycle, though the timing of transitions varies significantly between jurisdictions.

- **Pre-Heat Season (Planning):** Activities begin as early as October, while other stakeholders and community partners ramp up between January and March. Key actions include education for at-risk populations and cooling center selection.
- **Active Heat Season (Response):** This phase generally runs from May through September or early October. Public health interventions include canvassing, targeted messaging, and monitoring heat warnings.
- **Post-Heat Season (Recovery):** Recovery and data analysis occur between October and January. This phase is critical for after-action reporting and identifying “lessons learned” to inform the next cycle.
- **Activation Drivers:** Response triggers are multi-faceted, relying on weather forecasts (5-year trends and heat waves), health data (hospital discharges and 911 EMS calls), and logistical factors like utility outages.

Poster II: Standardizing Terminology and Public Communication

A significant portion of the discussion centered on the lack of a unified “common language,” which can create barriers to access for heat sensitive and at risk populations.

- **The “Umbrella” Concept:** Participants reached a consensus that “Heat Relief Site” should serve as the overarching term for all locations.
- **Site-Specific Definitions:** There is an urgent need to clearly define the services provided at “Hydration Stations,” “Cooling Sites,” and “Resource Centers” so the public has accurate expectations.
- **Simplification of Language:** Stakeholders recommended all terms and their definitions utilize plain language that is commonly understood by the general public.
- **Visual Recognition:** Participants proposed adopting statewide consistent icons and signage to decrease stigma and ensure sites are easily recognizable as safe environments.

Poster III: Resource Request and Escalation Pathways

The session revealed a disconnect between the “ideal” resource flow and the “real-life” experiences of local partners.

- **Flow Hierarchy:** The preferred escalation path is Local/Community → City → County → State. However, participants noted that current information flow is often uncoordinated.
- **Resource Needs:** Key supplies identified for public health response include Narcan, cooling towels, and reusable water bottles.
- **Communication Gaps:** Documentation often stalls when roles change or when there is confusion between Public Health and Emergency Management jurisdictions.
- **Systemic Barriers:** Some partners reported submitting county-level supply requests that were never received, highlighting a need for “closed-loop” communication.

Conclusion: Priorities for 2026 Initiatives and Partnerships

Based on participant feedback, the following priorities have been identified for the upcoming year to strengthen the statewide heat response network:

1. Technical and Operational Infrastructure

- **Centralized Resource Hub:** Develop a shared “cloud space” where partners can track supply demand and available materials in real-time.
- **Digital Communication:** Invest in digital signage to reach populations without mobile devices and maintain a shared phone roster/point-of-contact list for all agencies.
- **Standardized Standards:** Establish minimum operational standards for each site type to ensure service consistency across the state.

2. Strategic Partnerships

- **Inter-Agency Alignment:** Formalize the roles of Public Health vs. Emergency Management

to prevent communication breakdowns during transitions.

- **Utility & Community Integration:** Strengthen ties with utilities (e.g., SRP) for moratorium education and expand the network of non-governmental entities (NGEs) like faith-based groups and the Red Cross.
- **Data-Driven Planning:** Utilize the 5-year trend data and death data to identify “hot spots” for more targeted resource allocation.

3. Public Engagement

- **Unified Branding:** Implement a statewide communication campaign utilizing simple language and recognizable icons to increase public familiarity and reduce the stigma of seeking heat relief.

Academia, Data, and Clinical Breakout Session Findings

Overview

Academia, Data, and Clinical breakout session convened experts from public health, emergency management, academia, and local government to identify successes and systemic barriers in Arizona’s heat response. The consensus highlights a shift from basic heat awareness toward a need for sophisticated, integrated data ecosystems and hyper-local intervention strategies.

Demonstrated Wins and Scalability

Participants identified the utilization of EMS (AZ-PIERS) data as the most effective tool for pinpointing heat-call “hotspots.” By mapping 911 heat-call volumes in real-time, agencies successfully deployed mobile cooling units to high need locations.

- **Recommendation:** Formalize data-sharing agreements between ADHS and local municipalities to scale this methodology statewide.

- **Partnership Wins:** Cross-disciplinary training (e.g., UofA/City of Phoenix medical student HRI training) and GIS-based cooling center mapping were noted as high-impact models ready for expansion.

Primary Friction Points

- **Data Access and Standardization:** Participants identified inconsistencies in data standardization and difficulties obtaining data from other agencies as primary friction points. Specifically, they noted that long approval timelines for public data requests and siloed collection methods increase the staff burden and data cleaning. They further highlighted that better integration of utility data (which involves a long agreement process) and school health data (which requires nursing data standardization) is essential to prevent delays in public health interventions.
- **The “Storytelling” Gap:** There is a critical need to translate raw climate data into “human stories” to drive policy. Participants highlighted that data is often inaccessible to non-experts and needs to be paired with communication that makes the statistics actionable.
- **Metric Misalignment:** For example, current heat indices, such as Wet Bulb Globe Temperature (WBGT), may not accurately reflect the physiological reality of Arizona’s dry heat. This is a significant concern for protecting outdoor workers and vulnerable populations, as these metrics were often developed in different climates or for different demographics.

Intermediate Priorities/Needs

To move the needle over the next couple of years, stakeholders requested the integration of the following non-traditional data sources:

- **Social Intelligence:** Data from case workers and encampment teams to validate why cooling centers remain underutilized.
- **Secondary Medical Coding:** Reform in how ERs code heat-related incidents to ensure that

injuries caused by heat (e.g., a fall due to heat syncope) are captured as HRI.

- **Economic Modeling:** A “Cost of Inaction” analysis to quantify the financial burden of heat on first responders and the healthcare system.

Most Urgent Priorities/Needs

The following projects were identified as the most urgent mandates:

- **EMS Data Democratization:** Facilitate broader access to statewide EMS data for local mitigation planning.
- **Standardized Heat Relief Toolkit:** Develop a unified framework for Heat Relief Network (HRN) sites, including standardized surveys and data entry tools to eliminate “survey fatigue.”
- **Live School-safety Dashboards:** Partner with the NWS and school districts to provide real-time heat threshold alerts for outdoor student activities.
- **Residential AC Inventory:** Lead a data project to identify “AC deserts” or homes without functional cooling to target emergency utility assistance.

Tribal and Rural Heat Experiences Breakout Session Findings

The Rural and Tribal breakout session was co-hosted by ADHS and the University of Arizona to stimulate discussion on how the unique landscape in rural and Tribal communities impacts communities’ heat resiliency and individuals’ heat risk. During this session, about two dozen professionals from various service sectors highlighted how these populations face a much higher risk of health issues during extreme heat due to factors that are often overlooked in urban settings. Participants emphasized how Tribal and rural communities are at a higher risk for health problems during extreme heat for several reasons:

- **Isolation and Tough Terrain:** Many people live far apart in areas where the rocky or remote landscape makes it hard to build the roads or pipes needed for basic services. This makes it difficult for people to get help or reach a cool place.
- **A History of Mistrust:** Because of past negative experiences with government agencies (including Tribal governments), many residents may be hesitant to trust or follow official advice and “top-down” programs.
- **Too Many Problems at Once:** Heat isn’t the only struggle. Families are often already dealing with not having enough food, water shortages, wildfires, or even extreme cold in the winter. Heat is just one more weight on their shoulders.
- **Inconsistent Basics:** Many homes do not have a steady connection to electricity to run AC, clean water to stay hydrated, or cell service to receive emergency alerts.
- **Protecting What Matters:** For many, leaving home to go to a cooling center isn’t an option, because they cannot leave their livestock behind or leave their property or family members unprotected.

Recommendations

Participants suggested that the best way to help is through neighbor-to-neighbor support (mutual aid) and ways of helping that respect local traditions and tribal independence. Long-term investments are needed in two key areas:

- **Resources:** Better infrastructure like solar power and reliable transportation.
- **Relationships:** Building real trust and working together long before the summer heat arrives.

Strategies and Recommendations for Heat Relief in
**Rural and Tribal Communities
Across Arizona**



Mona Arora, Shunrang Chin, Maiya Block Ngaybe, Katy Pino y Ortiz
Photos courtesy of Ann Garn, University of Arizona



Extreme heat affects communities across Arizona in diverse ways, with no two communities experiencing impacts similarly. Risks are often intensified in rural and Tribal communities due to geographic isolation, limited infrastructure, and reduced access to essential services, requiring approaches that are tailored rather than one-size-fits-all. Effective heat preparedness and response efforts in these communities should incorporate lived experiences, and local expertise and leverage distinct geographies, governance structures, and cultural strengths. Proactive heat preparedness can be instrumental in reducing the risk of heat-related illness and death, particularly when combined education, early warning, and on-the-ground protections (e.g., water, cooling access).^{1,2}

The strategies and recommendations presented below were developed from six listening sessions held from June–October 2025. The sessions included 90 participants from 64 organizations involved in heat risk management and heat response across rural and Tribal communities in Arizona, including health departments (21)^s, local nonprofits (17), education institutions (10), Tribal governments and Tribal health services (9), community health centers (8), hospitals (4), emergency management offices (4), food banks (3), fire departments (2), law enforcement agencies (2), and other organizations (10).

Findings from the listening sessions revealed that extreme heat exacerbates chronic diseases like diabetes and cardiovascular conditions, compounds behavioral health crises, and creates acute workforce challenges for outdoor workers and emergency responders. The recommendations below provide a roadmap for addressing heat risk in rural and Tribal communities through a community-centered, ‘heat in all policies’ approach while also highlighting ways in which existing initiatives such as Arizona’s Rural Health Transformation Plan’s (RHTP) can build community capacity to mitigate health risks from extreme heat.

FUNDING: Prioritize Rural and Tribal Areas with Flexible Long-term Funding

Equitable and sustained investment in the resilience and overall health of rural and Tribal communities is essential to protect them from the growing threat of extreme heat. Funding approaches should balance short-term seasonal responses with parallel action to build long-term heat resilience. Funding is necessary to:

- **Cement community-driven solutions.**
- **Expand and strengthen reliable transportation** (e.g., free shuttles) to cooling centers and other community health and social services.
- **Create flexible funding streams that empower programs**, including those volunteer-run, and reduce restrictive eligibility requirements.
- **Adequately compensate community health workers/representatives** who serve as trusted messengers and two-way communication channels to target populations.
- **Invest in long-term heat mitigation solutions** (e.g., solar-powered cooling, portable ACs, infrastructure upgrades) rather than short-term, stop-gap measures (e.g., bottled water).

DATA: Co-Develop and Support Localized Data Management Systems

Localized data systems at the community level are needed to both understand local heat risk and inform decision-making for allocation of limited resources in rural and Tribal communities. Data systems need to be co-developed with local partners, correct gaps in current reporting (e.g., inconsistently reported heat-related health data), and ensure communities receive and access their data to support decision-making. Data collection should:

- **Improve death certificate coding** for heat so it is accurately captured as a cause or contributing factor.
- **Give communities a voice** in how data are presented.
- **Establish standardized, local-level** heat surveillance systems.

Examples of data needed at local and county level include:

- Heat-related hospitalizations and deaths
- Cooling center and hydration station usage patterns
- Household-level data regarding who is without air conditioning or adequate cooling
- Demographics of vulnerable populations (e.g., elders in mobile homes, outdoor workers, and unhoused people)
- Real-time hospital capacity during heat events across rural and tribal healthcare networks including Indian Health Services (IHS) facilities.
- Electricity costs
- Utility shutoff patterns

SOVEREIGNTY: Formalize Tribal Data Sovereignty

ADHS is additionally called upon to pursue policy changes that formalize Tribal data sovereignty protections and establish standardized, local-level heat surveillance systems that can be consistently used across jurisdictions. State agencies including ADHS should consider the following actions:

- **Strengthen collaboration** by inviting Tribal Nations to define what information they want to share, ensuring that data collection and use align with Tribal priorities, values, and sovereignty.
- **Develop collaborative intergovernmental data sharing agreements** with Tribal nations based on their preferences and terms (rather than using standard county-state contract language) while building state capacity within ADHS and legal offices to support these tailored agreements.
- **Address underreporting** of American Indian and Alaska Native data in health systems.
- **Create mechanisms** for Tribal communities' input on how data are interpreted and presented.
- **Ensure tribal communities receive their data** in useful, culturally appropriate ways for decision making.

COMMUNICATION: Use Multi-Channel, Culturally Appropriate Approaches to Share Information

Extreme heat communication in rural and Tribal communities must start from local realities rather than assuming urban tools and channels will translate seamlessly across large distances and areas with limited broadband and cell coverage. Heavy reliance on app-based alerts or website updates are often not effective strategies to reach those most at risk, including elders, outdoor workers, and unhoused people in non-urban areas. Tribal communities have distinct governance structures, languages, and cultural contexts that should be considered to ensure messages are designed and shared across platforms that community members find trustworthy (e.g., local radio, community health representatives). Communication can be improved by:

- **Using communication strategies** that are community-centered, culturally grounded, and responsive to the needs of the community.
- **Creating multi-channel messaging for the largest reach** by combining non-digital outreach (e.g., AM radio, flyers, and phone trees) and visual materials with community-driven digital tools (e.g., social media, text messages).
- **Using two-way communication strategies**, such as door-to-door outreach, that do not depend solely on internet or smartphone access.

HEAT THRESHOLDS: Establish Clear Actionable Heat Guidance

While in some areas of the state, community members are accustomed to temperatures in the mid-100s°F throughout the summer, other areas are accustomed to long stretches of up to seven months of temperatures above 110°F. Clear, location-specific heat thresholds are needed for rural and Tribal communities that vary in geography and elevation and incorporate varying experiences of “normal” and “extreme temperatures.” Actionable heat guidance is required with:

- **Clear temperature and condition thresholds** for heat alerts, with guidance on what actions should be taken at each level and to support local decision-making (e.g., schools).

- **Standardized heat advisory templates and protocols** with defined temperature and environmental triggers to prompt coordinated actions across stakeholders.
- **Sample heat messaging** with advice on how best to tailor across communities to ensure an appropriate level of urgency and understanding of risk.

POLICIES: Coordinate and Empower Communities through Rural and Tribal Heat Response Policies

Integrated heat response policies are needed that do not treat extreme heat as a standalone issue, but as part of broader efforts to improve health, infrastructure, and everyday living conditions. A strong integrated and collaboration framework weaves extreme heat into existing systems, aligns key partners before the season starts, and shifts power and resources toward community-led solutions that move people from basic survival toward long-term thriving. Future actions should include the following:

- **Integrate heat into core public health programs** including chronic disease prevention, maternal health, behavioral health, and substance use services, rather than treating it as “external” to health. These programs can then be used as regular touchpoints for education, screening, and support related to extreme heat.
- **Regularly hold pre-season planning meetings** among rural and Tribal organizations, counties, utilities companies, healthcare systems, emergency services, and transportation providers to strengthen coordination and readiness.
- **Establish clear, widely communicated emergency protocols for power outages** affecting high-risk residents, including partnerships with utilities to share outage information and prioritize restoration for vulnerable populations.
- **Adopt heat protections for outdoor workers**, including enforced rest breaks, shade, and hydration requirements during dangerous heat.
- **Update infrastructure standards and building codes** to promote energy efficiency and require

shade at bus stops, playgrounds, and other public spaces.

- **Create formal mechanisms for rural and Tribal members, elders, and local leaders to shape heat strategies**, rather than having outside entities design and impose programs.
- **Address underlying socioeconomic drivers of vulnerability** by designing heat policies with an explicit equity lens that tackles poverty, poor housing quality, and high utility costs as core contributors to heat risk and use this framework to support a transition from short-term crisis response to long-term community resilience and thriving.

These six strategies and recommendations outline a path forward that moves beyond short-term emergency response toward sustained, community-driven heat resilience. Aligning these strategies with existing efforts such as the RHTP offers an opportunity to embed heat resilience into broader health and infrastructure initiatives, ensuring that rural and Tribal communities are not only protected during extreme heat events, but supported in building long-term capacity to adapt and thrive as temperatures continue to rise.

A limitation to this report is that the findings are based on input from a limited number of participants across six focus groups, which may not capture the full range of input from all relevant communities and organizations. Additionally, the recommendations are yet to be validated with the communities from whom the information came and therefore must be interpreted with caution. However, validation and inclusion of additional rural and tribal partners will occur in the near future, and a peer-reviewed publication will be produced using the final data at a later date.

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[§]Note: a specific report related to tribe-specific data collected from rural heat listening sessions is in development. Contact manand@arizona.edu for more information.

APPENDIX A:

Glossary of Terms



The Arizona Heat Glossary is a comprehensive resource developed by the Arizona Department of Health Services (ADHS) to standardize terminology related to heat, weather, and heat-related illnesses. Created in response to the increasing need for consistent language surrounding heat hazards, this glossary was informed by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Tabletop Exercise, citing various credible sources. The primary aim of this glossary is to enhance communication about heat hazards among professionals and the public. As new developments emerge in this field, the glossary will be regularly reviewed and updated to reflect the latest information.

Term**Definition****Acclimatization**

The process of improving tolerance to heat by gradually increasing exposure to hot environments. The most effective method is to gradually increase exposure time over 1-2 weeks.

Air Temperature

A measure of how hot or cold the air is in a certain area. It indicates what the average temperature is at that particular time and place. It is measured using a thermometer and is expressed in degrees Fahrenheit or Celsius.

Arizona Heat Preparedness Network (AHPN)

Is an all-partner working group established to ensure that statewide interests, regional expertise, and diverse stakeholder perspectives are integrated into Arizona's heat readiness and relief activities.

Body Heat Storage (BHS)

The heat generated and retained by the human body. It's a key concept in the human heat balance equation, which maintains the body's normal temperature by balancing heat production and heat loss to the environment. Factors such as metabolic rate, external activity, skin surface heat exchange, and evaporative heat loss contribute to the body's heat storage.

Common Operating Picture (COP)

A continuously updated overview of an incident compiled throughout an incident's life cycle from data shared between integrated communication, information management, and intelligence and information sharing systems. The goal of a COP is real-time situational awareness across all levels of incident management and across jurisdictions.

Cool Corridors

Innovative, one-mile-long pathways or trails situated alongside major roads, designed to protect pedestrians, cyclists, and transit riders, as well as offer an escape from the high temperatures of the urban desert environment. They feature a range of temperature-lowering design features such as natural and engineered shade, benches, and drinking water fountains.

Cooling Center Optimization

A process in which a geospatial model is utilized to provide an area with the best locations to implement cooling centers to provide access to heat relief for the population.

Dehydration

An excessive loss of body fluids and essential salts (electrolytes) occurring when fluid output through sweat, breathing, and urine exceeds intake or replacement.

Term	Definition
Dry Heat	The combination of unusually high temperatures relative to a location's climate and low relative humidity (generally 30% or less). Most often associated with desert locations.
Extreme Heat	Is a period of time when weather conditions are substantially hotter than average for a particular time and place. These abnormally high temperatures, occurring with or without high humidity, pose a significant risk to human health, livestock, and infrastructure when they exceed the local population's ability to acclimate.
Extreme Heat Warning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risk Level: "Major" (dangerous) or "Extreme" (deadly) heat, which can cause serious heat-related illness or health problems. • Confidence Level: High (over 80%) chance that extreme heat will happen. • Timing: Issued at least one day before the heat event and stays in place until the end of the event.
Extreme Heat Watch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risk Level: "Major" or "Extreme" heat, which can lead to serious heat-related illness, expected based on the HeatRisk forecast. • Confidence Level: Moderate (50%) chance that extreme heat will happen. • Timing: Issued 3-7 days before the heat event and may be followed by a warning or advisory.
Heat Advisory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risk Level: "Moderate" risk of heat-related illness or health issues based on the Heat Risk forecast. • Confidence Level: High (80% or more) chance that the heat will cause impacts. • Timing: Issued at least one day before the event and stays in place until the heat event ends.
Heat-caused Deaths	Cases where environmental heat directly contributed to the conditions leading to death.
Heat Island Effect	The phenomenon in which urban or metropolitan areas experience higher temperatures than the surrounding rural areas. This temperature difference is due to man-made structures like buildings, roads, and other infrastructure absorbing and reflecting more heat than natural landscapes such as forests and water bodies. With dense urban areas packed with such structures and limited green spaces, they effectively become 'islands' of higher temperatures. During the day, these areas record temperatures about 1-7°F more, and during the night, about 2-5°F more compared to their rural surroundings. (EPA)
Heat Mitigation	Refers to strategies and actions designed to reduce the adverse effects of excessive heat on human health, ecosystems, and infrastructure.

Term

Definition

Heat-related Deaths

Cases where environmental heat played a role in the death, but it was not the primary cause. Other diseases or conditions were the main factors leading to death, with heat contributing as a secondary factor.

Heat-related Illness

Includes a wide range of conditions and symptoms caused by the body overheating and failing to cool itself effectively. The onset is usually a progression from mild to severe.

- **Heat Cramps** - Heat cramps are painful muscle spasms, usually in the legs, arms and abdomen, caused by loss of fluids and electrolytes as a result of sweating. Such cramps may also be a sign of heat exhaustion.
- **Heat Exhaustion** - A condition where the water and salt lost through excessive sweating are not replaced. It is a dangerous condition that can affect anyone, but some people are more susceptible than others. Older adults, people with high blood pressure, and those working in hot environments are the most likely to suffer from heat exhaustion.
- **Heat Stroke** - This is the most serious heat-related illness. It results from the body being unable to regulate its temperature due to prolonged exposure to hot conditions. During heat stroke, body temperature rapidly rises and sweat glands shut down, resulting in an inability to cool itself down. This can lead to organ failure and even death. It is a severe medical emergency that requires immediate medical attention.

Collection & Donation Site - Water bottles can be donated here for use at heat relief locations and hydration stations. Some sites also accept other donations such as clothing, hats, sun protection, and toiletries.

Heat Relief Locations

- **Cooling Center** - Indoor, air-conditioned location that offers hydration.
- **Hydration Station** - Location that offers drinking water. Indoor or outdoor locations where individuals can go to receive bottled water and other collected donated items.
- **Respite Center** - Indoor, air-conditioned location that offers hydration and allows for rest.

Heat Relief

Heat Relief Network - A regional network of partners (municipalities, tribal nations, nonprofit organizations, faith-based communities, businesses, and others) coordinating the mapping of heat relief locations and collection and donation sites to prevent heat-related illnesses and deaths among at-risk populations. The map and directories of each network are updated throughout the summer season.

Resilience Hub - A trusted, community-serving facility augmented to support residents as a gathering space to coordinate resource distribution and services before, during, or after a natural hazard event.

Term	Definition
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HeatRisk

Is a color-numeric index (see below) that forecasts the potential risk of heat-related health impacts over a seven-day period. Designed to supplement official National Weather Service (NWS) heat watches, warnings, and advisories, it integrates temperature forecasts with CDC heat-health data to provide a localized, impact-based perspective. Risk is represented by the five-level color-numeric index. Each threshold is evaluated using CDC mortality data and climatological context, specifically identifying how unusual a temperature is for a specific location and time of year, accounting for urban, rural, and seasonal differences. The HeatRisk is then displayed on an interactive map with upcoming events likely to cause significant health complications.

Extreme (4)

Dangerous heat events that can cause serious heat-related illness or even death for anyone who doesn't have a way to cool down or has limited water access. Temperatures will be extremely high, likely breaking records, and last for more than two days.

Major (3)

Increased risk of serious heat-related illness or even death for anyone who doesn't have a way to cool down or has limited water access. Both days and nights will be much hotter than usual, with temperatures above normal.

Moderate (2)

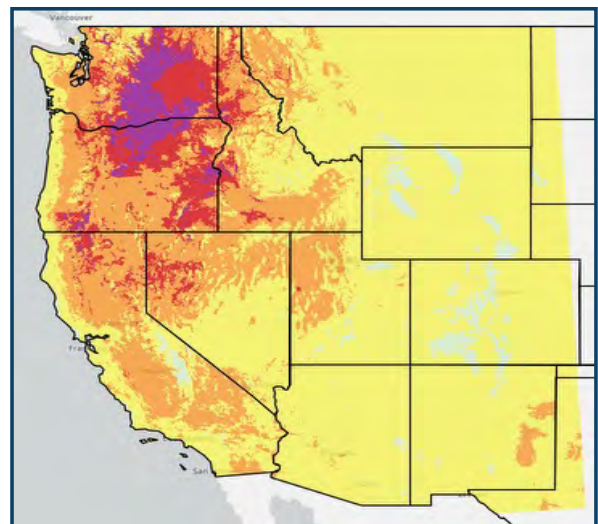
There's a moderate risk of heat-related illness, mainly in vulnerable people¹, and for anyone who doesn't have a way to cool down or has limited water access. It's not as likely to cause death, but there's still a chance. Daytime will be hot, and nights will stay warm, especially in cooler areas that don't usually get this kind of heat.

Minor (1)

There is a small risk of heat-related illness, mainly in vulnerable people¹. The chance of serious problems, like death, is very low.

None (0)

There is little to no risk of health problems from the heat.



Potential Heat Risks

- None
- Major
- Minor
- Extreme
- Moderate

Term	Definition
Heat Season	Refers to the hottest months of the year, generally May through October
Heat Wave	A period of abnormally hot weather, typically lasting two or more days. Heat waves can occur with or without high humidity. In Arizona, heat waves often occur without humidity, except during monsoon season. A prolonged period of abnormally hot weather exposes much of the population to heat-related illnesses.
Human Service Providers	Work directly with community members to assist them in finding stability. They provide assistance and resources for needs including, but not limited to food, housing, substance use, and other guidance.
Hydrated (during heat events)	The state of when the body has and is able to maintain enough fluids and electrolytes to allow for consistent sweating and temperature regulation to avoid heat illness.
Land Surface Temperature	The temperature of the Earth’s surface to touch. It is a measurement of how hot or cold the land is. Scientists use thermal cameras to measure land surface temperature, which helps them understand how different areas of the Earth are affected by heat. (NASA)
Mean Radiant Temperature (MRT)	This is the temperature you feel when heat is radiated to or from your body. This happens through radiation from sources like the sun or surrounding surfaces such as walls and floors. When calculating MRT, it’s important to account for both the air temperature and the temperatures of nearby surfaces radiating heat. For example, if you are standing in the sun on a hot concrete surface, you will feel a higher MRT than if you were standing in the shade next to cooler surfaces like grass or water.
Social Services	Is a network of programs and services that address the social and economic needs of the population. Social service programs include, but are not limited to, food assistance, unemployment and disability assistance, employment assistance, and shelter and housing.
Syndromic Surveillance	Is a type of public health surveillance that “provides public health officials with a timely system for detecting, understanding, and monitoring health events in near real-time (within 24 hours). By tracking symptoms of patients in emergency departments — before a diagnosis is confirmed — public health can detect unusual levels of illness to determine whether a response is warranted (CDC, 2023).” Currently, 91% (89/98) of emergency departments in Arizona report to the CDC’s National Syndromic Surveillance Program, representing an estimated 96% of emergency department visits in Arizona. Public health practitioners in Arizona have access to this data through the BioSense ESSENCE tool to analyze data.

Term	Definition
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Trigger Points	Are pre-decided cues that aid in situation assessment and lead to decisions on action for implementation or change.
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Vulnerable Populations (to heat)	(Heat Sensitive Populations) Some groups face a greater risk of heat-related illness than others. These groups include, but are not limited to:
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- Athletes
- Children
- Emergency responders
- Incarcerated people
- Indoor and outdoor workers
- Low-income communities
- Older adults
- People experiencing homelessness
- People with pre-existing conditions
- Pregnant people

Wet Bulb Globe Temperature (WBGT)	An experimental forecast tool indicating the expected measure of heat stress ² the human body would experience in direct sunlight, which takes into account temperature, humidity, wind speed, sun angle, and cloud cover (solar radiation). (NWS)
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¹**Vulnerable population (to heat):** Certain groups are at higher risk of heat-related illness, including children, older adults, people without housing, those with pre-existing health conditions, indoor and outdoor workers, emergency responders, incarcerated individuals, low-income communities, pregnant people, and athletes.

APPENDIX B:

Acronym List

AC	Air Conditioning
ACA	Arizona Commerce Authority
ACS	American Community Survey
ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
ADES	Arizona Department of Economic Security
ADHS	Arizona Department of Health Services
ADOSH	Arizona Division of Occupational Safety and Health



ADOT	Arizona Department of Transportation	EMS	Emergency Medical Services
AFN	Arizona Faith Network	EPA	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
AHCCCS	Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System	FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
AHPN	Arizona Heat Preparedness Network	GAO	Government Accountability Office
ALHOA	Arizona Local Health Officers Association	GIS	Geographic Information System
ASU	Arizona State University	HHS	Health and Human Services
ASTHO	Association of State and Territorial Health Officers	HOA	Homeowners Association
ADWR	Department of Water Resources	HRI	Heat-Related Illness
AZ	Arizona	HRS	Heat Relief Sites
AzCHER	Arizona Coalition for Healthcare Emergency Response	ICA	Industrial Commission of Arizona
AZSILC	Arizona Statewide Independent Living Council	ICS	Incident Command Structure
AZSVI	Arizona Social Vulnerability Index	IHS	Indian Health Service
BORR	Bureau of Operational Readiness and Response	LIHEAP	Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program
BRACE	Building Resilience Against Climate Effects	MAG	Maricopa Association of Governments
BRE	Bureau of Resiliency and the Environment	MCDPH	Maricopa County Department of Public Health
BRIC	Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities Grant	NASA	National Aeronautics and Space Administration
CDC	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention	NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
CLIMAS	Climate Assessment for the Southwest	NIHHIS	National Integrated Heat Health Information System
COP	Common Operation Picture	NIOSH	National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health
CRE	Community Resilience Estimates	NOAA	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
DEMA	Department of Emergency and Military Affairs	NWS	National Weather Service
DFFM	Department of Forestry and Fire Management	OME	Office of the Medical Examiner
ED	Emergency Department	OSHA	Occupational Safety and Health Administration
EM	Emergency Management	OTG	Office of the Governor
		PHEP	Public Health Emergency Preparedness
		PIO	Public Information Officer
		POC	Point of Contact

PSA	Public Service Announcement	UBI	Universal Basic Income
RCN	Regional Collaboration Network	UHI	Urban Heat Island
RMA	Roadside Motorist Assist	VOAD	Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster
RUCO	Residential Utility Consumer Office	WIC	Women, Infants, and Children
SCORCH	Southwest Center on Resilience for Climate Change and Health, University of Arizona	WIFA	Water Infrastructure Finance Authority
SOP	Standardized Operating Procedure		
SVI	Social Vulnerability Index		
UA	University of Arizona		

This report utilized Gemini, ChatGPT, MS Copilot, and Grammarly to enhance sentence structure and clarity, identifying potential grammatical errors, suggesting alternative phrasing or order, summarizing or paraphrasing, and suggesting section titles. All AI-generated text or edits were reviewed and manually adjusted by the author to ensure accuracy and alignment with the intended message.



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