

HEAT EMERGENCY RESPONSE PLAN

December 2021

I. INTRODUCTION

A. PURPOSE

This appendix outlines the coordinating actions taken by the State Emergency Response Team (SERT) following a heat related emergency that impacts North Carolina.

B. SCOPE

This appendix includes the anticipated actions of the Federal, State and local agencies as well as private sector organizations.

II. SITUATION AND ASSUMPTIONS

A. SITUATION

Extreme heat is a persistent issue in North Carolina. It is important for the State to be prepared in heat events. It has been documented that older North Carolinians, the young, and those living with chronic illness and disabilities are at risk from heat-related illnesses. In North Carolina, incident rates for heat-related emergency department visits are highest among young adult males in the 19-44 age group in rural counties. Counties are recommended to develop comprehensive county emergency heat response plans in order to be prepared to quickly provide a unified response in heat crisis situations. This plan only addresses actions taken at the State level and makes recommendations for county emergency heat response plans. It is intended to supplement and not supersede the NC Emergency Operations Plan and provides a strategy for State response actions under those plans.

B. ASSUMPTIONS

1. North Carolina will experience excessive heat.
2. North Carolina counties and their municipalities have the primary responsibility for emergency heat response.
3. The NC Division of Public Health is the lead technical agency for heat threats at the State level. The State Health Director or designee will serve as the technical advisor to the SERT Leader for the heat emergency response.
4. The NC SERT Leader will coordinate the response actions for State agencies, local governments, and volunteer agencies engaged in response actions.

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5. The Governor may authorize the SERT Leader to activate the SERT to a Level 3 when the National Weather Service issues an Excessive Heat Watch.
6. Special training will be required for all heat emergency responders.

III. ORGANIZATION AND ASSIGNMENT OF RESPONSIBILITIES

A. LEAD STATE AGENCY

1. NC DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY (NCDPS)

NORTH CAROLINA EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT (NCEM)

- a. Lead the State's actions in the heat emergency response, communicating Heat Advisories, Heat Watches, and Heat Warnings from the National Weather Service.
- b. Serve as State Liaison in discussions with federal agencies concerning the response actions to be taken.
- c. Coordinate the provision of all State heat emergency response resources through NC SPARTA.
- d. Consider providing a bi-weekly situation report while under Phase I (Advisory) until the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) is activated, then operate as directed by the SERT Leader.
- e. Outreach to local emergency managers once a Heat Advisory has been issued.
- f. Consider activating the State EOC to Level 3 once a Heat Watch has been issued.
- g. Consider requesting an emergency declaration from the Governor's Office once a Heat Warning has been issued.
- h. Manage public information and engagement of local media at critical phases concerning the heat emergency response through the State Joint Information Center (JIC), including the dissemination of information to the Department of Public Instruction, local school systems, and athletic departments.

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- i. Participate as a member of the Public Health Heat Emergency Response work group.

B. LEAD STATE TECHNICAL AGENCY

1. NC DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES (NCDHHS)

DIVISION OF PUBLIC HEALTH (DPH)

- a. Lead the Public Health Heat Emergency Response work group consisting of:
 - NC Emergency Management;
 - NC Division of Aging and Adult Services;
 - NC Department of Labor;
 - NC State Energy Office;
 - NC Department of Agriculture and Consumer Sciences;
 - NC Division of Mental Health;
 - Developmental Disabilities and Substance Abuse;
 - Department of Commerce;
 - Division of Services for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing; and
 - Division of Services for the Blind.
- b. Reach out to local health departments once the Heat Advisory has been issued.
- c. Provide technical guidance on increased demand for health services as a result of the heat emergency response.
- d. Provide heat emergency response resources as required.
- e. Provide health risk assessments using direct measurement and predictive models once a Heat Warning has been issued.
- f. Assist NC Department of Labor with worker safety guidance and work injury and illness surveillance.
- g. Coordinate with the State Joint Information Center (JIC) and local health departments to release messaging in Spanish and English to the public concerning heat related injuries and preventative actions for the same.
- h. Relay messaging to the NC Department of Transportation Safety and Loss Director.

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- i. Conduct health surveillance for heat related illness and injury.
- j. Coordinate with health officials from within North Carolina and other affected States in order to provide consistent policies and messages.

C. SUPPORTING STATE AGENCIES

1. NC DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND CONSUMER SERVICES (NCDA&CS)

- a. Provide recommendations to the SERT Leader and lead technical agency on phased public health response and food safety.
- b. Provide specific information to SERT on food regulatory issues.
- c. Participate in the Public Health Heat Emergency Response Work Group and support the Food Emergency Response Network Laboratories.
- d. Provide technical support on veterinary issues concerning the heat emergency response as situation warrants.
- e. Provide support of fires as it interacts with the Heat Advisories, Heat Watches, and Heat Warnings.
- f. Provide heat emergency response resources as required.
- g. Participate as a member of the Public Health Heat Emergency Response Work Group.

2. NC DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY (NCDEQ)

- a. Serve as primary advisor on environmental concerns.
- b. Provide heat emergency response resources as required.
- c. Provide support on interaction of drought, if applicable, with Heat Advisories, Heat Watches, and Heat Warnings.
- d. Participate as a member of the Public Health Heat Emergency Response Work Group.

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3. NC DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES (NCDHHS)

DIVISION OF AGING AND ADULT SERVICES (DAAS)

- a. Serve as a primary advisor for the older adult population (age 60 and above), in collaboration with disability specific divisions, on concerns relating to those 18 years old and above with disabilities.
- b. Reach out to local aging representatives once a Heat Advisory have been issued.
- c. Implement and coordinate Operation Fan Heat Relief.
- d. Provide data on locations of isolated or vulnerable older citizens.
- e. Participate as a member of the Public Health Heat Emergency Response Work Group.

DIVISION OF SERVICES FOR THE DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING (DSDHH)

DIVISION OF SERVICES FOR THE BLIND (DSB)

- a. Facilitate communication of the National Weather Service Heat Advisory, Watch, and Warning to communities of deaf, deafblind, hard of hearing, or blind individuals.
- b. Serve as primary advisor on communication access concerns relating to individuals who are deaf, deafblind, hard of hearing, or blind.
- c. Advise how to make appropriate communication access accommodations for these communities.
- d. Provide sign language interpreter for emergency press conferences.
- e. Provide data on locations of citizens with disabilities.
- f. Participate as a member of the Public Health Heat Emergency Response Work Group.

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DIVISION OF MENTAL HEALTH, DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES, AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE SERVICES (MHDDSAS)

- a. Provide recommendations to the SERT Leader on mental health, developmental disabilities, and substance abuse issues.
- b. Provide educational materials that are usable by people with sensory and cognitive disabilities to impacted communities and responders on impacts of some psychiatric medicines on the body's ability to cool, stress reduction techniques, local behavioral health, developmental disabilities, and substance abuse series through the public service system of local management entities.
- c. Coordinate all related activities with staff of the NC Division of State Operated Healthcare Facilities.
- d. Participate as a member of the Public Health Heat Emergency Response Work Group.

DIVISION OF HEALTH SERVICE REGULATION (DHSR)

OFFICE OF EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES (OEMS)

- a. Coordinate and direct the activation and deployment of State resources of medical personnel, supplies, equipment, and pharmaceuticals with Public Health as needed.
- b. Assist in the development of local capabilities for the on-site coordination of all emergency medical services needed.
- c. Establish and maintain the cooperation of the various State medical and related professional organizations in coordinating the shifting of Emergency Medical Services resources from unaffected areas to areas of need.

DIVISION OF SOCIAL SERVICES (DSS)

- a. Coordinate with mass care support agencies to support local operations.
- b. Obtain personnel rosters, sheltering listings, and number of shelter managers from county departments of social services responding in affected jurisdictions.

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- c. Provide technical assistance, when requested, to county departments of social services in organizing resources to provide food and water requirements for affected population.
- d. Provide technical assistance, when requested, to county departments of social services in organizing transportation of food and water from identified warehouses to mass care feeding sites.
- e. Track and report the status of local support operations.
- f. Coordinate with partners to answer questions from county departments of social services about accessibility.
- g. Coordinate all requests for spoken-language and American Sign Language interpreters.

4. NC DEPARTMENT OF LABOR (NCDOL)

- a. Provide expertise in labor regulations for responders, including sending hazard alert letter or other publications, ensuring compliance with applicable regulations.
- b. Maintain situational awareness on locations of agricultural laborers during the heat emergency.
- c. Provides advice on labor regulation to the SERT Leader.
- d. Provides worker safety guidance.
- e. Identifies areas of concentrated numbers of agricultural laborers, utilizing non-traditional sources of information (i.e. Agricultural Extension)
- f. Participate as a member of the Public Health Heat Emergency Response Work Group.

5. NC DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE (NCDOC)

- a. Document the monetary effects of the heat emergency on NC Commerce.
- b. Coordinate with the JIC to provide outreach to NC residents.
- c. Provide demographic data for analytical purposes to determine the location of the most vulnerable populations as needed.

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- d. Participate as a member of the Public Health Heat Emergency Response Work Group.

6. NC COMMISSION ON VOLUNTEERISM AND COMMUNITY SERVICE

- a. Provide a Volunteer Plan to the SERT Leader for the heat emergency response.
- b. Manage volunteer activities during a heat emergency response.

7. NC DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY (NCDPS)

ADULT CORRECTION AND JUVENILE JUSTICE (ACJJ)

- a. Provide prisoner work teams to assist with the heat emergency response, if required.
- b. Provide buses as needed for transportation of volunteers or prisoners working on the heat emergency response.

NORTH CAROLINA NATIONAL GUARD (NCNG)

- a. Provide Guardsmen to assist with the heat emergency response, as needed.
- b. Provide buses as needed for transportation of volunteers or Guardsmen working on the heat emergency response.
- c. Provide NCNG mission capable packages as requested through NCEM.

8. UTILITY PROVIDERS

- a. Promote reduced utility usage when Heat Advisory, Heat Watch, or Heat Warning is issued
- b. Provide support as needed to other utilities if able.

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D. SUPPORTING FEDERAL AGENCIES

1. NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION (NOAA)

NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE (NWS)

- a. Serve as the official source of Watches, Warnings, and Advisories.
- b. Provide weather information and direction to NC Emergency Management and partners.
- c. Be available for State Emergency Response Team calls, as needed.

IV. CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS

A. GENERAL

Since heat emergencies should occur with ample warning, it will be somewhat easy to determine the extent of the impacted area. The SERT concept of operations for heat emergency response is a trigger-based operation initiated at the recommendation of the NCDPH representative (Lead Technical Agency) and concluded upon the recommendation of the same. These triggers are based on daytime heat index which may lead to a Heat Advisory, Heat Watch, or Heat Warning.

During the heat emergency response, the SERT will use commercial telephone lines/cell phones and NC SPARTA as the primary means of communication. Alternate means in order of priority are e-mail, 800 MHz, satellite telephones, fax, amateur radio, and couriers.

If not felt at the State EOC, reports of heat emergencies will come in through a myriad of sources including emergency operations centers, citizens, law enforcement dispatchers and news reporters.

RCCs are staffed by various agencies and local emergency managers. They may also be staffed with members from Incident Management Teams (IMTs) if the Operations Chief sees fit.

B. RESPONSE ACTIONS

In the event of a heat emergency, the State EOC may choose to activate at the following levels:

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Advisory: The State EOC will assume routine daily support and maintenance operations with normal logistic channels for all agencies. SERT members may closely monitor supply items needed for heat emergency response operations as well as closely track equipment availability.

Watch: The State EOC may activate where all SERT agencies should initiate tasks to prepare for deployment, and identify any resource shortages.

Warning: Rations and billeting will be coordinated by NCEM Logistics/Finance for large groups performing response and recovery operations. Deploying operations should have a sustainment plan prior to execution and fuel should be coordinated by the SERT.

C. RECOVERY ACTIONS

1. INITIAL

If State resources are overwhelmed and additional assets are needed, mutual aid agreements between neighboring States will be implemented. This will be largely dependent on the effects of the neighboring State. These initial actions may include, but are not limited to the following:

- Identify items needed for heat emergency; and
- Locate items used for resource shortages.

2. CONTINUING

Continuing recovery efforts will occur until areas have been returned to a somewhat normal state. These recovery actions may include, but are not limited to the following:

- Operate shelters until those affected are able to return home; and
- Rebuild Identify and continue to provide items needed for heat emergency.

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V. REFERENCES

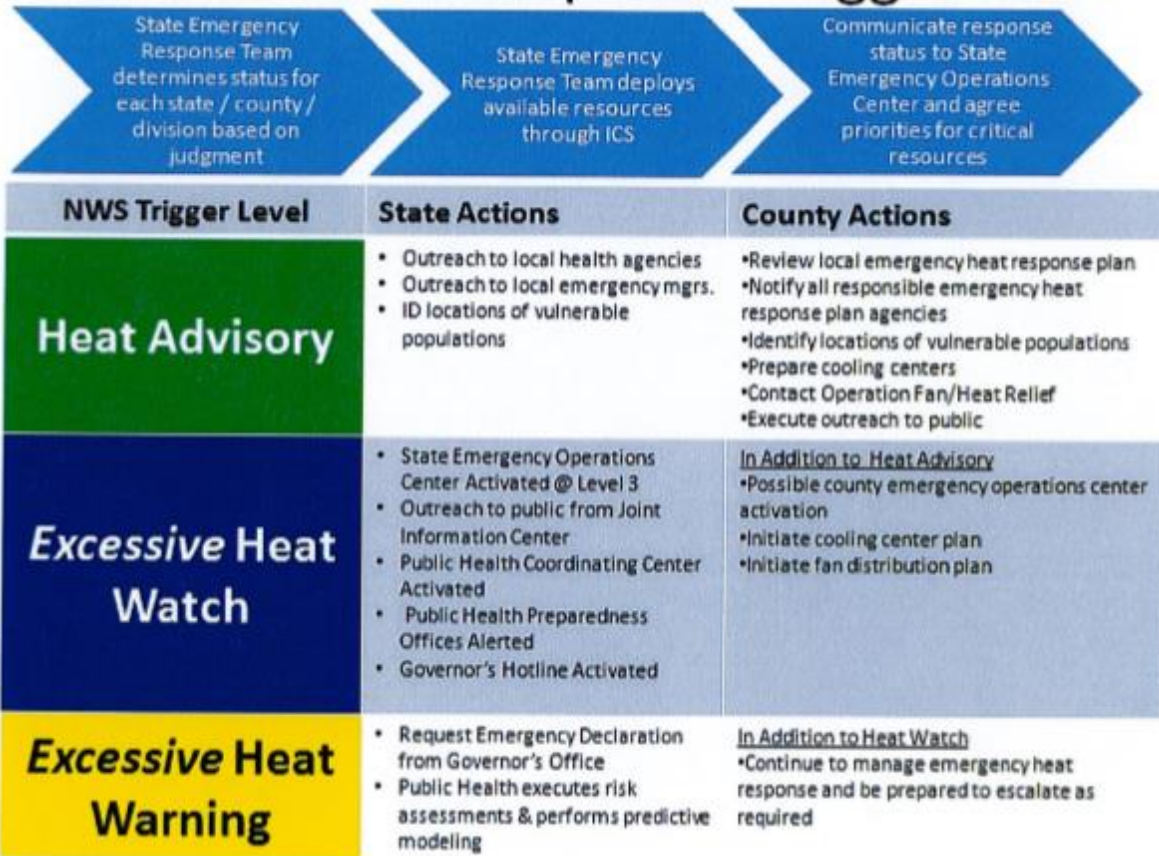
- A. Chapter 166A of the North Carolina General Statutes, North Carolina Emergency Management Act, as amended.

VI. TABS

- A. Heat Emergency Public Health Response Trigger Guide
- B. NCEM Human Services Mass Shelter Plan
- C. Special Training for Emergency Heat Responders

NORTH CAROLINA EMERGENCY OPERATIONS PLAN (NCEOP)
 ANNEX B | APPENDIX 9 | TAB A
HEAT EMERGENCY RESPONSE PLAN TRIGGER GUIDE
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NC Heat Plan Response Trigger Guide



SPECIAL TRAINING FOR EMERGENCY HEAT RESPONDERS

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A. PURPOSE.

This tab documents training required for Heat Emergency Responders.

B. SPECIAL TRAINING INCLUDES:

- a. The signs and symptoms of heat-related illness.
- b. Appropriate response to signs and symptoms of heat-related illness
- c. Basic training on the National Weather Service's Heat Advisory, Watch, and Warning system
- d. Work/rest cycles and other heat stress control measures
- e. Occupational Safety and Health Administration's guidance on heat-related illness.
- f. American Conference of Governmental Industrial Hygienist Threshold Limit Values for heat stress using wet bulb globe temperature scale.
- g. Heat index charts.
- h. Resource on heat-related illness.
- i. Universal access and fundamental knowledge of diversity of population and how to ensure all have access to information and could benefit from interventions.