

# LANE COUNTY, OREGON COOLING CENTER COORDINATION PLAN



## I. PURPOSE

This Cooling Center Coordination Plan establishes a process the County will use in preparation for and during excessive heat events to:

- Notify the public of available cooling centers using news releases, social media, and web postings;
- Coordinate with local agencies, organizations, and county departments to provide specific information about each participating organization's cooling center; and
- Identify organizations with an interest in offering a facility as a public cooling center.

## II. BACKGROUND

Extreme heat events are a leading cause of weather-related deaths in the United States. Groups typically identified as "heat sensitive" or "heat vulnerable" include:

- The elderly and children;
- People on certain medications and / or with preexisting conditions which make them sensitive to heat;
- Outdoor workers and those exercising or doing strenuous activities;
- People without a reliable source of cooling and / or water;
- People not acclimated to the expected heat.

Historically the warmest days recorded were on July 27<sup>th</sup>, 2021 at 111°F; August 10<sup>th</sup>, 1981 at 108°F; July 29, 2009 at 106°F; July 28<sup>th</sup>, 1998 at 105.1°F; July 24<sup>th</sup> 2006 105.1°F; and August 8<sup>th</sup> 1978 at 104°F.

These temperatures have historically had a local impact, with an estimated 4 deaths and hundreds of visits to emergency and urgent care for heat-injury conditions. The threat of heat-related illnesses and deaths is significant. Providing cooling centers for individuals and families to get relief from the heat is both prudent and appropriate.

## III. DEFINITIONS

### Cooling Center

An air-conditioned facility made available to the general public as a respite during excessive heat events. Typical cooling centers include churches, libraries, and shopping malls, recreation, theaters, and community centers.

### Excessive Heat Event

The National Weather Service defines an excessive heat event as one where peak daytime temperatures in Lane County reach or exceed 90°F for a prolonged period of time accompanied by the National Weather Service (NWS) issuing a Heat Advisory or

Lane County Cooling Center Procedures

July 27<sup>th</sup>, 2021

an Excessive Heat Warning. Other factors considered are the overnight low temperatures, number of consecutive days experiencing these high temperatures, and humidity / heat index values.

### **Excessive Heat Warning**

An alert issued by the NWS based on the Heat Risk forecast. Warnings are normally issued when conditions pose a high risk to health and usually involve prolonged durations of very high temperatures lasting for at least two days.

### **Experimental Heat Risk Forecast:**

The NWS has developed an experimental forecast product to help emergency managers, heat health decision makers, and first responders quickly identify the potential for impactful heat. The product provides a color and numeric value that places forecast heat for a specific location into an appropriate level of heat concern. The Heat Risk values are produced from the current date through seven days in the future.

Category	Level	Meaning
Green	0	No Elevated Risk
Yellow	1	Low Risk for those extremely sensitive to heat, especially those without effective cooling and/or adequate hydration
Orange	2	Moderate Risk for those who are sensitive to heat, especially those without effective cooling and/or adequate hydration
Red	3	High Risk for much of the population, especially those who are heat sensitive and those without effective cooling and/or adequate hydration
Magenta	4	Very High Risk for entire population due to long duration heat, with little to no relief overnight

Source of previous page diagram: National Weather Service

( <https://www.wrh.noaa.gov/wrh/heatrisk/> )

The NWS Heat Risk forecast provides a quick view of heat risk potential over the upcoming seven days. The heat risk is portrayed in a numeric (0-4) and color (green/yellow/orange/red/magenta) scale which is similar in approach to the Air Quality Index (AQI) or the Ultra Violet (UV) Index. This product is supplementary to the official NWS heat watch/warning/advisory program and is meant to provide continuously available heat risk guidance for those decision makers and heat sensitive populations who need to take actions at levels that may be below current NWS heat product levels.

## **Heat Advisory**

An alert issued by the NWS based on the Heat Risk forecast. Advisories are normally issued when conditions pose a moderate risk to health and usually involve prolonged durations of high temperatures lasting for at least two days.

## **Heat Index**

The Heat Index or the “Apparent Temperature” is an accurate measure of how hot it really feels when the relative humidity is combined with the actual air temperature.

## **IV. CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS**

When an excessive heat event is forecasted or occurs and a decision is made to implement the procedures, LCEM will coordinate with other emergency managers in the county and cooling center providers to identify facilities that will be available/activated. LCEM will also coordinate with the County H&HS to assist with public health messaging.

## **V. ACTIVATION CRITERIA FOR COOLING CENTER COORDINATION**

Lane County Emergency Management (LCEM) staff monitors and receives NWS forecasts and warnings with indicators of excessive heat events. The following criteria should trigger coordinated conversation of cooling center activation:

- NWS issues a Heat Advisory or Excessive Heat Warning;
- NWS issues an email weather briefing related to an excessive heat event; and / or
- Evaluation of NWS Heat Risk or other forecast products which show a high likelihood of the onset of an excessive heat event.
- Lane County Public Health (LCPH) monitors increased reports of heat-related chief complaints (through local syndromic surveillance, and direct reports from local hospitals) to inform future planning efforts.
  - LCPH will also communicate with the medical examiner to monitor local heat-related deaths.
  - Collect and disseminate State and local medical examiner data regarding heat-related injuries.

When triggering criteria are met, County Emergency Manager, County Health Officer, H&HS Public Information Officer, should discuss indicators and if needed suggest the need for Cooling Centers. When activated, the implementation procedures listed below will be followed.

## **VI. IMPLEMENTATION PROCEDURES**

LCEM will manage cooling center procedure implementation in coordination with other county departments and supporting organizations.

Using a tiered approach to activation of cooling centers and information sharing:

1. On excessive heat days that are during the normal business day, whereas all public facilities are open and available for community members to seek respite, the

protocol will be to refer to all public spaces to include libraries, theaters, malls, recreation centers as places community members can seek respite on excessive heat days. Provide a list of facilities to emergency managers (EMs) and public information officers (PIOs) for website updates and press releases.

2. During excessive heat events, whereas public facilities may not be readily available (weekends/evenings) LCEM, Lane County Public Health (LCPH), PIOs, and Community Organizations Active in Disaster (COAD) will look to those facilities/groups or businesses that organically open their doors to the public. The County will reach out to COAD leadership to inquire what entities have already, or plan to act as cooling centers. Many faith-based and community based organizations will open their doors to the public to get relief in extreme weather conditions. Information about who is participating as well as location-specific information will be collected and distributed by COAD, LCEM, LCPH, and PIOs. LCEM will coordinate with City Emergency Managers. During this level staff will work to identify locations that plan to be cooling center capabilities in rural unincorporated areas for tier 2 and 3.
3. IF, during an excessive heat event, option 1 & 2 have been exhausted or are otherwise not meeting the needs of the community, the County in coordination with community partners from other cities, will work to open and staff temporary cooling center(s). A decision to move forward on a County-run cooling center will be made collectively by the County Emergency Manager, H&HS Health Officer, Public Health Manager, H&HS Public Information Officer and/or any other requested stakeholder. A decision to open a temporary cooling center should also include a discussion of the resources needed to be provided at a site. This would include but not limited to seating, water, snacks, staff, and companion animal services (Lane County Animal Services), etc.

## **VII. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **A. Lane County – LCEM/LCPH**

LCEM will take the following actions:

- Coordinate messaging with H&HS Public Information Officer (PIO).
- Work with COAD to contact potential cooling center providers to verify event specific participation and locations event specific information (hours of operation/location address). COAD contacts should be the current Chair/Vice Chair/Secretary or designee. COAD can provide other leadership from NGOs as appropriate.
- County Emergency Manager/designee, Public Health Director/Designee in coordination with COAD Chair/designee will lead an evaluation of the cooling center program needs and facilitation.
- Work with COAD to develop and maintain a list of participating cooling centers and disseminate it along with the H&HS news release in accordance with the e-mail distribution list.
- Identify transportation resources for community members seeking shelter from heat.

- Conduct debrief post event and season with all necessary stakeholders.

## **B. Lane County Departments/Divisions/Offices/Programs**

The County Administration Office, Health & Human Services (Developmental Disabilities Division, Public Health Division, and Human Services Division) and Central Lane Communications Center (CLCC) and Sheriff's Office dispatch centers will complete steps 1 – 3 below:

1. Refer callers inquiring about the cooling center procedures to LCPH or LCEM and/or the website for additional information.
2. Provide cooling center information to partner agencies, clients and customers during excessive heat events.
3. Provide feedback to improve the program, as needed.

## **C. Lane County H&HS - PIO**

The Lane County H&HS PIO will take the following actions:

- Consult with the health officer to write and send news release(s) that include appropriate health messaging.
- Develop and issue news releases in cooperation with LCEM.
- Post the news release and the cooling center list on the H&HS website.
- Work with H&HS staff to distribute the news release and list to organizations serving the county's non-English speaking communities.
- Post information on H&HS and the county website.
- Post information on social media.

Post-event and/or post-season:

- Participate in an evaluation of the cooling center program and activations.

## **D. Cooling Center Providers**

Organizations interested in offering a facility as a cooling center will be asked to do the following for excessive heat events:

- Notify COAD or LCPH when they plan to open a facility as a cooling center including the dates and hours of operation.
- Notify COAD or LCPH of any changes to the cooling center(s) hours of operations.

Post-event and/or post-season:

- Provide approximate number of people who used their facility:
- To include length of stay, whether they are sheltered or unsheltered
- Provide information about the cooling centers and areas of improvement

Resources:  
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