

Lincoln-Lancaster County Heat Response Plan



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| Lead Organization: | Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department (LLCHD) |
| Supporting Organizations: | Lincoln-Lancaster County Emergency Management National Weather Service (NWS) Omaha Valley American Red Cross |
| Government Organizations: | Aging Partners City of Hickman City of Lincoln Attorney's Office City of Lincoln Communications City of Lincoln Mayor's Office City of Lincoln Planning and Development Services City of Lincoln Urban Development City of Lincoln/Lancaster County Human Resources Lancaster County Administration Lancaster County Engineer Lancaster County Sheriff's Office (LSO) Lincoln City Libraries (LCL) Lincoln Fire and Rescue (LFR) Lincoln Parks and Recreation Lincoln Police Department (LPD) Lincoln Transportation and Utilities (LTU) Ponca Tribe of Nebraska |
| Critical Infrastructure Organizations: | Black Hills Energy Bryan Health CHI St. Elizabeth Hospital Lincoln Electric System (LES) Lincoln Public Schools (LPS) University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL) Emergency Management |
| Community Organizations: | Asian Community and Cultural Center (ACCC) Catholic Social Services (CSS) Center for People CenterPointe Community Action Partnership of Lancaster and Saunders Counties Family Service Lincoln Food Bank of Lincoln Good Neighbor Community Center (GNCC) Grace Chapel Indian Center Lincoln Littles Malone Center Matt Talbot Kitchen and Outreach (MTKO) People's City Mission (PCM) Salvation Army The Bridge Behavioral Health UNL Center on Children, Families, and the Law – Continuum of Care |

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I. PURPOSE

The purpose of the Lincoln-Lancaster County Heat Response Plan (hereby referred to as the heat response plan) is to reduce the adverse public health impacts of heat events by providing City and County departments and community partners with a framework that includes clearly defined terms, thresholds, and coordinated and individual response actions. This plan aims to enhance preparedness, improve access to services, and ensure resource assistance during heat events.

Heat events are defined as a period of abnormally hot weather generally lasting more than two days. Typically, if there is a heat event there would be a heat product (watch, warning, or advisory) issued by the National Weather Service.

II. SCOPE

The Heat Response Plan addresses the coordinated preparation for and response to heat events in Lancaster County, Nebraska. The groups involved in this plan include the local health department and other local government agencies, utilities, healthcare providers, school systems, and community organizations. Objectives include:

- Help organizations identify and define their individual and mutual preparedness and response activities for heat events based on their resources and capabilities, refining these collectively through lessons learned and evolving best practices.
- Clearly define the activation thresholds for heat events.
- A whole community approach to communications, including addressing hard-to-reach at-risk populations with alert messaging, collaborative social marketing, and public awareness campaigns.

III. SITUATION OVERVIEW

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) states that, because of climate change, we can expect heat events to become longer, more intense, and more frequent.¹ Based on projected greenhouse gas (GHG) concentrations from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), temperatures could reach the following by 2050 if GHG emissions continue on the path of 'business as usual' (Representative Concentration Pathway 8.5):²

- **The average temperature in Lincoln is likely to increase by 5°F.**
- **There will be 44 days per year with a heat index greater than 100°F. Of those days, 26 will have a heat index greater than 105°F.**

¹ EPA. Extreme Heat. (8/22/25) <https://www.epa.gov/climatechange-science/extreme-heat>

² Hegewisch & Abatzoglou. Future Climate Dashboard web tool. (n.d.) The Climate Toolbox. <https://climatetoolbox.org/>

Heat index is how hot it really feels when relative humidity is factored in with actual air temperature. These values are devised for shady, light wind conditions, exposure to full sunshine can increase values up to 15°F.³

We must be prepared for changes that climatologists anticipate in the future, and those that are already happening. The increased number of days with high temperatures and high heat indices is likely to increase the incidence and severity of heat-related illnesses.

Heat-related illnesses are a range of illnesses resulting from the inability to regulate internal body temperature in people exposed to high environmental heat.⁴ This includes heat rash, sunburn, heat cramps, heat exhaustion, and heat stroke.

Everyone is at risk of heat-related illness and death; however, some groups face a greater risk than others. Groups most at risk to heat include, but are not limited to:

- Infants, young children, pregnant people, and older adults (age 65+) whose bodies are less able to adapt to heat.
- People with disabilities or certain health conditions (like heart disease, asthma, diabetes, obesity, mental health conditions), and those taking certain medications. Your healthcare provider can let you know if this is you.
- People who work outdoors (or indoors with limited to no air conditioning) – especially new workers, temporary workers, or those returning to work after a week or more off.
- People who exercise or do strenuous activities outdoors during the heat of the day.
- People without a reliable source of cooling and/or hydration, including people experiencing homelessness or near-homelessness.
- People who are not acclimated to the level of heat expected – especially those who are new to a much warmer climate.
- Pets, service animals, support animals, and livestock.

Some additional factors that might increase the risk of developing a heat-related illness include:

- High levels of humidity
- Fever
- Dehydration
- Poor circulation
- Sunburn
- Alcohol use

³ NWS / NOAA. Heat Forecast Tools. (n.d.) <https://www.weather.gov/safety/heat-index>

⁴ Gauer & Meyers. Heat-Related Illnesses. (4/15/19) American Family Physician 99(8):482-489
<https://www.aafp.org/pubs/afp/issues/2019/0415/p482.html>

IV. ASSUMPTIONS AND PLANNING FACTORS

This plan is based on the following assumptions:

- A. This plan will be utilized in response to heat events requiring a combined, coordinated, and countywide response. The Health Department Director (or designee) will determine when this threshold is met.
- B. This plan is intended to address foreseeable heat events and will be adapted as necessary to address unforeseen scenarios.
- C. If the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) is activated to manage heat-related emergencies, all operations will be managed in accordance with the National Incident Management System (NIMS) and the Incident Command System (ICS).
- D. Under most circumstances, the physical EOC may not be activated. However, primary and support agencies may operate virtually for situational awareness, collaboration, and resource management.

V. LEGAL AUTHORITIES

Nebraska Law

NEB. REV. STAT. § [81-829.36](#)

Emergency Management Act

NEB. REV. STAT. § [1630\(4\)\(c\)\(ii\)\(A\)\(II\)](#)

Local boards of health; membership; terms; vacancies; duties.

NEB. REV. STAT. § [1630\(4\)\(ii\)\(B\)\(IV\)](#)

Local boards of health; membership; terms; vacancies; duties.

Lincoln Municipal Code

TITLE 2 OFFICERS, DEPARTMENTS AND PERSONEL; Chapter 2.06 Mayor

State of Emergency; Declaration; Lincoln Municipal Code § [2.06.040](#)

TITLE 2 OFFICERS, DEPARTMENTS AND PERSONEL; Chapter 2.06 Mayor

Emergency Powers; Mayor; Lincoln Municipal Code § [2.06.050](#) (f)

TITLE 8 HEALTH AND SANITATION; Chapter 8.02 Health and Safety Hazards -- Generally

Health and Safety Hazards Prohibited; Lincoln Municipal Code § [8.02.030](#) (10)

TITLE 8 HEALTH AND SANITATION; Chapter 8.02 Health and Safety Hazards -- Generally

Enforcement; Lincoln Municipal Code § [8.02.040](#)

TITLE 12 PARKS; Chapter 12.08 General Rules and Regulations
Lincoln Municipal Code § [12.08.330](#)

VI. **HEAT ACTIVATION THRESHOLDS**

The Heat Response Plan includes a preparation phase and a post-season phase. The preparation phase begins around March, prior to the heat season, and the post-season phase begins around October, after the heat season concludes.

*In Lancaster County, Nebraska, the **heat season** refers to when the temperatures become hotter, usually May through September. This can also refer to the summer season, which is the warmest season of the year and lasts from June to August in the northern hemisphere.*

The heat response plan includes specific actions that occur based on the issuance of an extreme heat warning, watch, or advisory from the National Weather Service (NWS) Omaha Valley office, which are based on the heat index. The criteria for heat alerts vary throughout the country based upon the region. The following action levels are used by the National Weather Service for Lancaster County (central region criteria). They may not occur in this specific order.

A. Heat Advisory

Heat index of at least 105°F.

B. Extreme Heat Watch

Conditions are favorable for dangerous heat.

C. Extreme Heat Warning

Heat index of at least 110°F, or when a heat index of 105°F or higher is expected for 4 or more consecutive days.

**It is important to note that these are guidelines, and the local National Weather Service forecaster can use their own discretion to issue an alert based on anticipated impacts. Forecasters have a range of +/- two degrees on either side of base criteria to allow flexibility.*

The **Wet Bulb Globe Temperature** (WBGT) is a measure of heat stress in direct sunlight, which is based on temperature, humidity, wind speed, sun angle, and cloud cover. This differs from the heat index, which is based only on temperature and humidity and is calculated for shady areas. This is a supplemental indicator that can be used for specific populations, such as athletes or outdoor workers. This is because it is location-specific and is best measured on-site using a [WBGT](#)

[device](#). It is the responsibility of organizations to determine if (and how) they will use the WBGT to supplement their internal heat planning efforts. For more information, see [attachment 3](#).

VII. COOLING CENTER OPERATIONS

A **cooling center** refers to an indoor location, either an air-conditioned or cooled building that has been designated as a site to provide temporary respite and safety for community members during times of extreme heat.

Throughout the summer, **during regular business hours**, all Lincoln City Libraries and Lincoln Parks and Recreation Centers are available as cooling centers. Aging Partners Victory Park Senior Center will also be available.

During an **Extreme Heat Warning**, the following cooling center locations will be open until **8 p.m. daily**:

- [Anderson Branch Public Library](#) (3635 Touzalin Avenue, Lincoln, NE 68507)
- [Bennett Martin Public Library](#) (136 S 14th Street, Lincoln, NE 68508)
- [F Street Community Center](#) (1225 F Street, Lincoln, NE 68508)
- [Victory Park Senior Center](#) (600 S. 70th Street, Lincoln, NE 68510)

There are additional cooling center locations operated by partner organizations. The Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department does not regulate or license cooling centers. These locations include:

- [Catholic Social Services](#) (2241 O Street, Lincoln, NE 68510)
- [Community Action Partnership](#) (210 O Street, Lincoln, NE 68508)
- [Grace Chapel](#) (1345 S. 16th Street, Lincoln, NE 68502)
- [Matt Talbot Kitchen and Outreach](#) (2121 N. 27th Street, Lincoln, NE 68503)
 - **During a Heat Advisory or Extreme Heat Watch**
 - Monday – Friday 8:30am to 6:30pm
 - Saturday and Sunday 11:30am to 6:30pm
 - **During an Extreme Heat Warning**
 - Monday – Friday 8:30am to 9:00pm
 - Saturday and Sunday 11:30am to 9:00pm
- [People’s City Mission](#) (110 Q Street, Lincoln, NE, 68508)
 - Overnight shelter

- [The Bridge Connect](#) (721 K Street, Lincoln, NE 68508)
 - Limited number of pets welcome
- [The Salvation Army](#) (2625 Potter Street, Lincoln, NE 68503)

If you are struggling in the heat or if you see someone who may be struggling – please reach out to **CenterPointe Street Outreach at 402-782-1199 from 7am to 9pm every day**, including weekends. For more urgent assistance, please call the Lincoln Police Department non-emergency line at [402-441-6000](tel:402-441-6000) or 911.

For a full list of cooling center hours and locations, see [attachment 4](#).

If your organization operates as a cooling center and would like to be added to this list, please contact Maizie Humm at mhummm@lincoln.ne.gov or 402-441-8011.

Heat Safety Education and Resources

It is recommended that all cooling center locations have a **“Stay Safe in Extreme Heat”** one-pager available which provides important heat safety information. These should be displayed in a central area where individuals can easily see and access them. This document and accompanying social media graphics are available in English, Spanish, Vietnamese, Karen, Burmese, Arabic, Farsi, Dari, Pashto, and Ukrainian.

Find the one-pager in the resources section on lincoln.ne.gov/heat

For more information see [attachment 1](#).

Select cooling center locations listed above will have a limited amount of **Heat Relief Kits** available that may include items such as a reusable water bottle, electrolyte packet, lip balm, sunscreen, aloe vera, and bug spray. These kits will be distributed during a Heat Advisory, Extreme Heat Watch, or Extreme Heat Warning (while supplies last).

Power Outages

Lincoln Electric System (LES) has worked with the City of Lincoln to identify Anderson Branch Public Library, Bennett Martin Public Library, F Street Community Center, and Victory Park Senior Center and will consider them when determining actions that are required to maintain system stability. While power outages are still possible at these facilities, this designation highlights these locations as essential for heat response and recovery efforts.

VIII. GENERAL OPERATIONS SUMMARY

Below are possible or suggested preparation, response, and post-season tasks that participating organizations of various types may choose to adopt. The tasks are written in general terms and purposely do not tell how to do the task. Each organization should develop standard operating procedures for their specific operations during a heat event. The tasks listed below may not be all-inclusive, and all activities may not need to be applied in every heat event.

| Preparation | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Activation Threshold | Annually by May 1 or as appropriate |
| Actions | |
| Review and update Heat Response Plan. | |
| Review and update internal protocols for heat events. | |
| Annual pre-season partner meeting to be held around April. | |
| Obtain, prepare, or update public information materials (fact sheets, social media graphics, press release templates, etc.) | |
| Provide education on symptoms of heat-related illnesses and appropriate treatment. | |
| Ensure communication plans are coordinated across the City of Lincoln, Lancaster County, and community partners. | |
| Plan and coordinate an extreme heat tabletop exercise prior to the heat season, as needed. | |

| Baseline | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Activation Threshold | Approximately May 1 through October |
| Actions | |
| During regular business hours, all Lincoln City Libraries and Lincoln Parks and Recreation Centers are available as cooling centers. Aging Partners Victory Park Senior Center will also be available. | |
| During regular business hours, cooling centers operated by partner organizations are available. | |
| General messaging on heat safety and symptoms/treatment of heat-related illnesses. | |
| Share and relay information on resources available to the community, as needed. | |

Heat Advisory or Extreme Heat Watch

| | |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Activation Threshold | National Weather Service Omaha Valley issues a heat advisory or extreme heat watch for Lancaster County. |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

Response Actions

During regular business hours, all Lincoln City Libraries and Lincoln Parks and Recreation Centers are available as cooling centers. Aging Partners Victory Park Senior Center will also be available.

During regular business hours, cooling centers operated by partner organizations are available. Some locations may offer extended hours. Please call ahead or check the facility's website or social media before you go.

Share messaging on active heat alerts and available resources to help the community stay informed.

Initiate transport services to identified cooling locations, if within the scope of your organization.

Enhanced messaging on heat safety, symptoms/treatment of heat-related illnesses, and available resources (including cooling centers).

Limit or revise work schedules for staff working in non-air-conditioned spaces, as necessary. Ensure access to appropriate hydration and safety equipment.

Limit, reschedule, or relocate outdoor events as necessary.

Check in on at-risk clients and community members.

Extreme Heat Warning

| | |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Activation Threshold | National Weather Service Omaha Valley issues an extreme heat warning for Lancaster County. |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

Response Actions

Hours of operation will be extended until 8:00pm at Anderson Branch Library, Bennett Martin Public Library, F Street Community Center, and Victory Park Senior Center for the public to utilize as cooling centers.

During regular business hours, all Lincoln City Libraries and Lincoln Parks and Recreation Centers are available as cooling centers. Aging Partners Victory Park Senior Center will also be available.

During regular business hours, cooling centers operated by partner organizations are available. Some locations may offer extended hours. Please call ahead or check the facility's website or social media before you go.

Share messaging on active heat alerts and available resources to help the community stay informed.

Monitor for community impacts and determine if additional support is needed.

Initiate transport services to identified cooling locations, if within the scope of your organization.

Enhanced messaging on heat safety, symptoms/treatment of heat-related illnesses, and available resources (including cooling centers).

Limit or revise work schedules for staff working in non-air-conditioned spaces, if possible. Ensure access to appropriate hydration and safety equipment.

Limit, reschedule, or relocate outdoor events if possible.

Check in on at-risk clients and community members.

Post-Season

Activation Threshold

Approximately October - November

Actions

Conduct an After-Action Review that includes all partner organizations to discuss strengths and areas of improvement for next season.

Convene an internal post-season debrief.

Update Heat Response Plan to accurately reflect what occurred during the heat season, as needed.

Compile a report summarizing the final statistics on heat-related deaths and illnesses.

IX. PLAN MAINTENANCE

This plan will be reviewed and revised annually by all partner organizations (page 2). This process will coincide with the annual pre-season partner meeting. The Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department (LLCHD) will be responsible for coordinating the maintenance and distribution process outlined below.

The plan will be distributed to partners before the annual pre-season meeting. Each partner agency and organization will update, as needed, their section based on their applicable personnel and/or protocol changes. The updates, and any approved best practices, new initiatives, and lessons learned will then be integrated into the revised version of the plan and distributed no more than 30 days following the annual pre-season meeting.

As a result of frequent annual activations of the plan, a tabletop exercise is generally not necessary. However, during the first couple of years of implementation, tabletop exercise should be conducted to improve initial implementation of the plan. After that, if two summer seasons pass without meeting the thresholds for plan activation, a tabletop exercise should be conducted. The LLCHD and the Lincoln-Lancaster County Emergency Management Agency will coordinate the development and planning of the tabletop exercise.

Attachments

1. Stay Safe in Extreme Heat Communication Materials

The Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department developed a website that includes information on preparedness, at-risk groups, safety tips, symptoms and treatment of heat-related illnesses, tips for staying cool at home, a searchable map of cooling center locations, and links to additional resources including social media graphics. You can access this website at lincoln.ne.gov/Heat.

In addition, a “Stay Safe in Extreme Heat” one-pager was developed that highlights key information from the website under the “heat plan, data, and resources” section. This one-pager and accompanying social media graphics are available on the website in English, Spanish, Arabic, Burmese, Dari, Farsi, Karen, Pashto, Ukrainian, and Vietnamese.



Stay Safe in Extreme Heat

**Extreme heat can be dangerous.
Stay cool, hydrated, and informed.**

The National Weather Service issues alerts when dangerous weather is expected.

Heat Advisory – Take Action!

It's hot enough to be dangerous, but not as extreme as a warning.

Extreme Heat Watch – Be Prepared!

Extreme heat might be on the way.

Extreme Heat Warning – Take Action!

It's dangerously hot right now or will be very soon.

Check [weather.gov](https://www.weather.gov) or your local media for alerts.

Know Your Risk

Extreme heat can affect anyone.
People at greater risk include:



Babies and young children



People with chronic medical conditions or disabilities



Pregnant people



Outdoor workers



Older adults



People who exercise outside



People without air conditioning



Pets

Stay Safe



Drink plenty of water



NEVER leave kids or pets in a parked car



Wear loose, light-colored clothes and put on sunscreen if outside



Check on family, friends, neighbors and pets



Limit outdoor activities



Find air-conditioned places to cool off



lincoln.ne.gov/Heat










Signs of Heat Illness

If your body gets too hot and can't cool down, you can get sick.

Heat Exhaustion




- Dizziness 
- Thirst 
- Heavy Sweating 
- Nausea 
- Weakness 

ACT FAST

- Move to a cooler area
- Loosen clothing
- Sip cool water
- Seek medical help if symptoms don't improve

Heat exhaustion can lead to heat stroke.


Heat Stroke

- Confusion 
- Dizziness 
- Becomes Unconscious 

ACT FAST - CALL 911

- Move person to cooler area
- Loosen clothing and remove extra layers
- Cool with water or ice

Heat stroke can cause death or serious harm if emergency treatment is not given.





Cooling Centers

A cooling center is a place people can go to get relief from extreme heat. Even a few hours spent in air conditioning can help prevent heat-related illnesses.

During regular business hours, all Lincoln City Libraries and Lincoln Parks and Recreation Centers are available as cooling centers. Victory Park Senior Center will also be available.

During an **extreme heat warning**, the following cooling centers will be open until 8 p.m. daily:

Anderson Branch Library – 3635 Touzalin Ave. 402-441-8540
 Bennett Martin Public Library – 136 S. 14th St. 402-441-8500
 F Street Community Center – 1225 F St. 402-441-7951
 Victory Park Senior Center – 600 S. 70th St., 402-441-7070

Find more local cooling centers at lincoln.ne.gov/Heat



lincoln.ne.gov/Heat



2. Health Recommendations

Preparation Prior to the Heat Season: Around March or April

- Clean and trim around outdoor HVAC units so air can flow freely. Wash dust and dirt from cooling coils.
- Have a contractor do annual, pre-season check-ups.
- Check that ceiling or tabletop fans are in good working order. Clean fan blades so the motor can work efficiently and move air better.
- If you are unable to afford your cooling costs, weatherization, or energy-related home repairs, contact the [Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program](#) (LIHEAP) for help. Some local organizations that may be able to offer assistance include [Catholic Social Services](#), Community Action Partnership of Lancaster and Saunders Counties [Emergency Services](#) or [Weatherization](#) programs, and [Lincoln Electric System](#).
- Talk to your doctor about how to prepare if you have a medical condition or are taking medications.
- Prepare emergency supplies. Gather food, water, and medicine. Organize supplies into a Go-Kit and a Stay-at-Home Kit. In the event of a power outage, you may lose access to clean drinking water. Set aside at least one gallon of water per person per day. Consider adding drinks with electrolytes. Include sunscreen and wide-brimmed hats.
 - Go-Kit: at least three days of supplies that you can carry with you. Include backup batteries and chargers for your devices (cell phone, CPAP, wheelchair, etc.).
 - Stay-at-Home Kit: at least two weeks of supplies.
 - Have a 1-month supply of medication in a child-proof container and medical supplies or equipment.
 - Have at least 1 gallon of water per person per day for at least 3 days.
 - Keep personal, financial, and medical records safe and easy to access (hard copies or securely backed up).
 - Consider keeping a list of your medications and dosages on a small card to carry with you.
 - For more information on what to include in your kit, visit the [Red Cross](#) website.
- Learn how to [recognize and respond to heat illnesses](#).
- Learn [First Aid and CPR](#).

Recommended Actions Prior to Heat Event:

- Gather food, water, and medications in advance in case of store closures or having to relocate to a cooler location.
- Identify those in your neighborhood who, due to age, health or medical condition, are at higher risk and may need help during extreme heat events.

- Install temporary window reflectors (for use between windows and drapes), such as [aluminum foil-covered cardboard](#), to reflect heat back outside.
- Weather-strip doors and sills to keep cool air in.
- Cover windows that receive morning or afternoon sun with drapes, shades, awnings, or louvers. (Outdoor awnings can reduce the heat that enters a home by up to 80 %)
- Look up the location of your nearest cooling center in case you need to go there. Be sure to call beforehand to check the hours of operation. If you need transportation or pet care, make a plan before the heat event occurs. Find local cooling centers at lincoln.ne.gov/heat.
- Know the symptoms of heat-related illnesses and the appropriate responses.
- Additional recommendations for older adults:
 - Make sure a trusted friend or relative has an extra key to your home, knows where you keep your emergency supplies, and can use lifesaving equipment or administer medicine.
- Additional recommendations for people with chronic health conditions:
 - Read the side effects of medications and talk with your doctor about how heat exposure will interact with them.
 - Know the phone numbers and locations for local medical facilities, such as hospitals or nursing homes, to create contingency plans if you cannot access a cooling center, lose power, or need more help.

Recommended Actions During a Heat Event:

- Check in with and notify family, friends, and neighbors who may need assistance (older adults, those with access and functional needs, those with pre-existing medical conditions, pregnant people).
- Check the local news and government outlets for health and safety updates.
- NEVER leave children alone in closed vehicles, even with the windows open. Touch a child's safety seat and safety belt before using it to ensure it's not too hot before securing a child.
- Drink plenty of water throughout the day, even if you do not feel thirsty. Drink beverages low in added sugar such as infused water and smoothies. Limit intake of alcoholic beverages and caffeinated beverages.
 - You can check that you are getting enough water by noting your urine color. Dark yellow may indicate you are not drinking enough water.
 - People who have epilepsy or heart, kidney, or liver disease; or are on fluid-restricted diets; or have a problem with fluid retention should consult a doctor before increasing liquid intake.
- Eat light, cool, and easy-to-digest foods such as fruit or salads. Try to avoid using the stove or oven to cook – it will make you and your house hotter.

- Take the weather into consideration when planning and scheduling outdoor activities and have modified backup plans in case of extreme heat. Postpone or modify outdoor games/activities if they occur during the hottest part of the day. Ensure there is plenty of shade and water available.
- If possible, try to complete strenuous work early in the morning when it is cooler. If you must work during the hottest part of the day, use a buddy system and take frequent water breaks in the shade.
- If you're not accustomed to working or exercising in a hot environment, start slowly and pick up the pace gradually. If exertion in the heat makes your heart pound and leaves you gasping for breath, STOP all activity. Get into a cool area or into the shade, and rest, especially if you become lightheaded, confused, weak, or faint.
- Dress in loose-fitting, lightweight, and light-colored clothes that cover as much skin as possible. Avoid dark colors because they absorb the sun's rays.
- Wear sunscreen. Sunburn affects your body's ability to cool down and can make you dehydrated. Protect the face and head by wearing a wide-brimmed hat.
- Take a cool shower or bath to help cool off.
- Save energy - reduce your home power use to help reduce brownouts or blackouts. Turn off nonessential lights, televisions, games, and computers, and unplug chargers.
- Maximize time in air-conditioned areas and limit sun exposure whenever feasible.
- If you do not have AC or if the AC in your home is off due to a power outage or other cause, consider spending the warmest part of the day in public buildings such as libraries, movie theaters, shopping malls, and other community facilities including cooling centers.
- Go to a cooling center if your home loses power during periods of extreme heat. Stay on the lowest floor out of the sunshine if air conditioning is not available.
- If you lose power and plan to use a generator that runs on gas, kerosene, or propane, ALWAYS put generators outside well away from doors, windows, and vents. Never use a generator inside homes, garages, crawlspaces, sheds, or similar areas. Carbon monoxide (CO) is deadly, can build up quickly, and linger for hours.
- Check the [air quality](#) – hot weather can worsen ozone levels and other types of air pollutants. Air pollution can worsen respiratory and heart conditions.
- If you are unable to afford your cooling costs, contact the [Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program](#) (LIHEAP) for help. Some local organizations that may be able to offer assistance include [Catholic Social Services](#), [Community Action Partnership](#) of Lancaster and Saunders Counties Emergency Services, and [Lincoln Electric System](#).
- Seek medical care immediately if you have, or someone you know has, symptoms of heat-related illness like muscle cramps, headaches, nausea, or vomiting.

- For heat cramps, get the individual to a cooler location and remove excess clothing. Lightly stretch and massage affected muscles to relieve spasms. Give cool sports drinks containing salt and sugar. Discontinue liquids if the victim is nauseated.
- For heat exhaustion, get the individual to lie down in a cool place. Loosen or remove clothing. Apply cool, wet cloths. Fan or move victim to air-conditioned place. Give sips of water or cool sports drinks containing salt and sugar. Discontinue liquids if the victim is nauseated. Seek immediate medical attention if there is no improvement, the victim is unable to take fluids, or if vomiting occurs
- If you get sunburned, take a cool shower and moisturize the affected area with lotion or aloe vera. Cover the sunburn with a tightly woven fabric if you must go outside in the sun. Sunburns draw fluid to the skin's surface (and away from the rest of the body) so drink extra water to remain hydrated. Apply dry, sterile dressings to any blisters, and take ibuprofen to help reduce inflammation. Seek medical attention if a blistering burn covers 20% or more of the body (e.g., a child's whole back), or if you experience fever or chills.
- Additional recommendations for older adults:
 - If possible, avoid being home alone during a summer power outage or heat event. If you are able, attend a social event in an air-conditioned space.
 - Make sure a trusted friend or relative has an extra key to your home, knows where you keep your emergency supplies, and can use lifesaving equipment or administer medicine.
 - Drink fluids regularly to avoid getting dehydrated and overheated. Talk to your doctor about whether you need fluids with extra electrolytes in the heat.
 - Have a friend or relative call to check on you twice a day during a heat wave. If you know someone in this age group, check on them at least twice a day.
- Additional recommendations for people with chronic health conditions:
 - Work with your support network if you have one – caregivers, neighbors, friends, and family – to monitor and address your heat-related needs. Have them check in with you regularly to ensure you are safe and healthy.
 - Keep a cooler and cold packs nearby to help keep refrigerated medicine, like insulin, cool during a power outage. Don't put insulin directly on ice or gel pack.
- Additional recommendations for pet-owners:
 - NEVER leave pets alone in closed vehicles, even with the windows open.
 - Check on your animals frequently to ensure that they are not suffering from the heat. Provide plenty of fresh water for your pets. If they are outside, ensure they have access to a shady area and water.

- If you have a dog, walk them early in the morning or later in the evening. Asphalt and dark pavement can be very hot to your pet's feet.

3. Wet-Bulb Globe Temperature (WBGT)

The [Wet-Bulb Globe Temperature](#) (WBGT) is a measure of heat stress in direct sunlight, which is based on temperature, humidity, wind speed, sun angle, and cloud cover (solar radiation). This differs from the heat index, which is based only on temperature and humidity and is calculated for shady areas. This is a supplemental indicator that can be used for specific populations, such as athletes or outdoor workers. This is because it is location-specific and is best measured on-site using a [WBGT device](#).

The military uses the WBGT to gauge the potential for heat related stresses to this day. OSHA and many nations also use the WBGT as a guide to manage workload in direct sunlight, as do athletic departments (college and high school) and events. If you work or exercise in direct sunlight, this is a good element to monitor. The Nebraska School Activities Association (NSAA) Board of Directors approved the Wet Bulb Globe Temperature (WBGT) as the recommended measurement practice and device for measuring acceptable heat/humidity levels for practices and contests. The use of WBGT is recommended throughout the calendar year when the ambient temperature is above 80°. These guidelines are currently utilized by Lincoln Public Schools for athletic events.

| Region 2 | Activity Guidelines |
|-----------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <79.7 | Normal activities 3 separate - 3 to 5 minute rest / water breaks per hour |
| 79.8-84.6 | Use discretion for intense / prolonged practice 3 separate - 4 to 6 minute rest / water breaks per hour Monitor at risk athletes closely Cold water immersion available |
| 84.7-87.6 | Maximum practice time is 2 hours Helmets and shoulder pads only Remove helmets and shoulder pads if conditioning 4 separate - 4 to 6 minute rest / water breaks per hour Monitor at risk athletes closely Cold water immersion available Contests: Per NFHS rules, implement additional/extended timeouts for rest / water breaks |
| 87.7-89.7 | Maximum practice time is 1 hour Helmets and shoulder pads prohibited No conditioning 4 separate - 5 to 7 minute rest / water breaks per hour Monitor at risk athletes closely Cold water immersion available Contests: Per NFHS rules, implement additional/extended timeouts for rest / water breaks Contests: Consider delaying / postponing start times |
| >89.7 | No outdoor activities Cancel or delay outdoor practices / contests until lower WBGT is observed. |

4. Alphabetical List of All Cooling Centers

| Name | Address | Phone Number | Hours |
|-------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Aging Partners Victory Park Senior Center | 600 S 70 th St | 402-441-7070 | Monday-Friday: 8am – 4:30pm Saturday-Sunday: Closed *During extreme heat warning, hours will be extended until 8 p.m. (including weekends, 11am - 8pm) |
| Air Park Community Center | 4900 Mike Scholl St | 402-441-7876 | Monday-Friday: 6:30am – 8pm Saturday: 10am – 6pm Sunday: 12pm – 6pm |
| Anderson Branch Library | 3635 Touzalin Ave | 402-441-8540 | Monday-Thursday: 10am – 8pm Friday-Saturday: 10am – 6pm Sunday: 12pm – 8pm *During extreme heat warning, hours will be extended until 8pm if not already open |
| Belmont Recreation Center | 1234 Judson St | 402-441-6789 | Monday-Thursday: 6:30am – 6:30pm Friday: 6:30am – 5:30pm Saturday-Sunday: Closed |
| Bennett Martin Public Library | 136 S 14th St | 402-441-8500 | Monday-Thursday: 10am – 8pm Friday-Saturday: 10am – 6pm Sunday: 12pm – 6pm *During extreme heat warning, hours will be extended until 8pm if not already open |

| | | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Bethany Branch Library | 1810 N Cotner Blvd | 402-441-8550 | Monday-Saturday: 10am – 6pm Sunday: Closed |
| Calvert Recreation Center | 4500 Stockwell St | 402-441-8480 | Monday-Thursday: 6:30am – 7pm Friday: 6:30am – 5:45pm Saturday-Sunday: Closed |
| Catholic Social Services | 2241 O St | 402-474-1600 (ext 0 to front desk) | Monday-Thursday: 9am – 12pm and 1pm – 4pm Friday: 9am – 12pm Saturday-Sunday: Closed |
| Community Action Partnership of Lancaster and Saunders Counties | 210 O St | 402-471-4515 | Monday-Friday: 8:30am – 5pm Saturday-Sunday: Closed |
| Easterday Recreation Center | 6130 Adams St | 402-441-7901 | Monday-Friday: 9am – 4:30pm Saturday-Sunday: Closed |
| Eiseley Branch Library | 1530 Superior St | 402-441-4250 | Monday-Thursday: 10am – 8pm Friday-Saturday: 10am – 6pm Sunday: 12pm – 8pm |
| F Street Community Center | 1225 F St | 402-441-7951 | Monday-Friday: 8am – 8pm Saturday: 10am – 5pm Sunday: 1pm – 5pm *During extreme heat warning, hours will be extended until 8pm if not already open. |

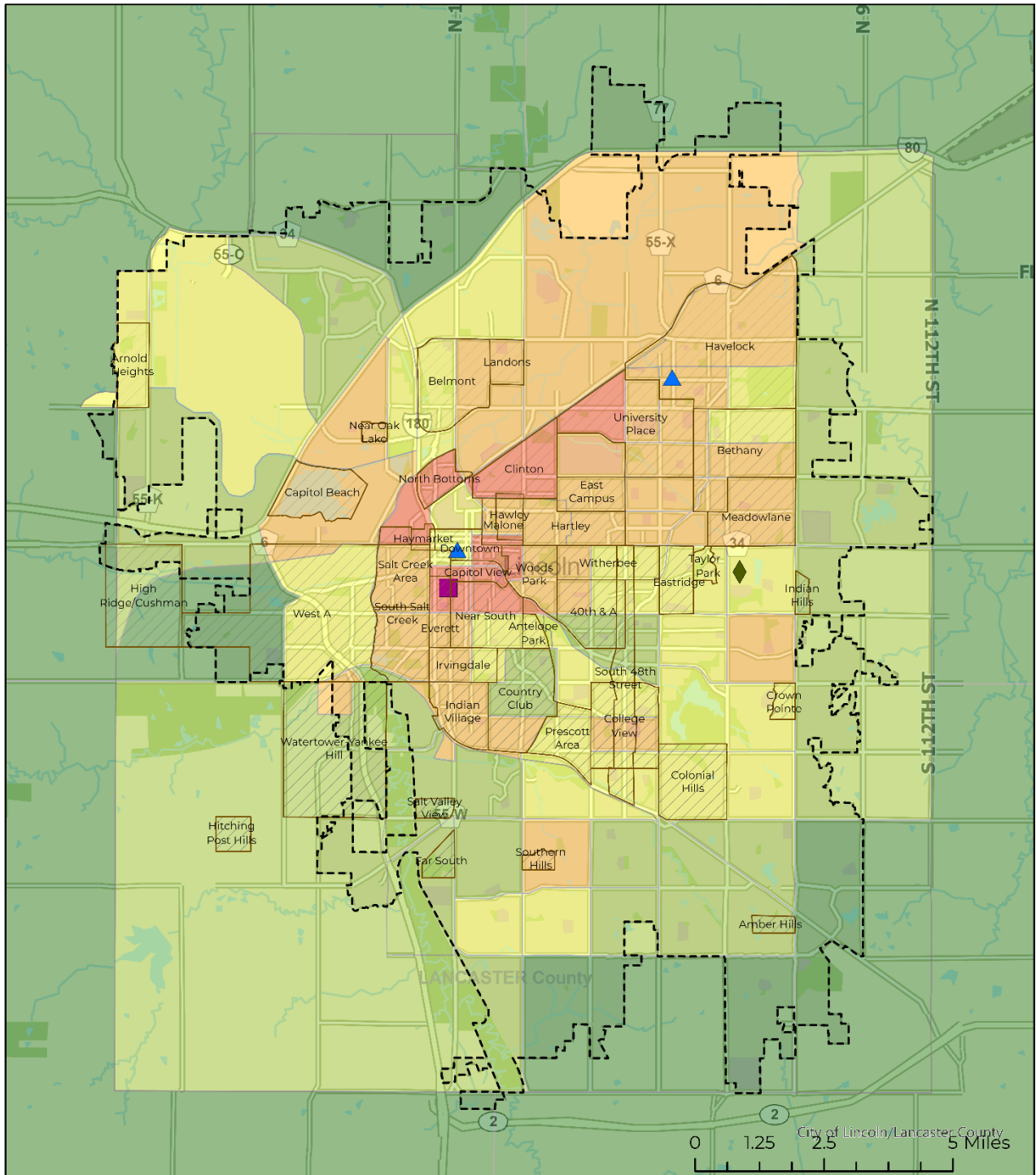
| | | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------|------------------|--------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Gere Branch Library | 2400 S 56th St | 402-441-8560 | Monday-Thursday: 10am – 8pm Friday-Saturday: 10am – 6pm Sunday: 12pm – 8pm |
| Grace Chapel | 1345 S 16th St | 402-484-8555 | Monday-Thursday: 1pm – 3pm |
| Irving Recreation Center | 2010 Van Dorn St | 402-441-7954 | Monday-Thursday: 9am – 7pm Friday: 9am – 6pm Saturday-Sunday: Closed |
| Matt Talbot Kitchen and Outreach | 2121 N 27th St | 402-477-4116 | Monday-Wednesday: 8:30am – 6:30pm Thursday: 8:30am – 1pm and 5pm – 6:30pm Friday: 8:30am – 6:30pm Saturday-Sunday (meals only): 11:30am – 12:30pm and 5:30pm – 6:30pm *During a Heat Advisory, hours will be: Monday-Friday: 8:30am – 6:30pm Saturday-Sunday: 11:30am – 6:30pm *During an Extreme Heat Warning, hours will be: Monday-Friday: 8:30am – 9pm Saturday-Sunday: 11:30am – 9pm |
| People's City Mission (overnight shelter) | 110 Q St | 402-475-1303 | 24/7, 365 days a year |
| South Branch Library | 2675 South St | 402-441-8570 | Monday-Thursday: 10am – 8pm Friday-Saturday: 10am – 6pm Sunday: 12pm – 8pm |

| | | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|--------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| The Bridge Connect <i>(pets welcome)</i> | 721 K St | 402-477-3951 | Monday-Friday: 2pm – 7pm |
| The Salvation Army | 2625 Potter St | 402-474-6263 | Monday-Friday: 9am-4pm |
| Walt Branch Library | 6701 S 14th St | 402-441-4460 | Monday-Thursday: 10am – 8pm Friday-Saturday: 10am – 6pm Sunday: 12pm – 8pm |
| Williams Branch Library <i>(located inside of Air Park Community Center)</i> | 4900 Mike Scholl St | 402-441-8580 | Monday-Friday: 10am – 2pm Saturday-Sunday: 12pm – 4pm |

5. Heat Vulnerability Index (HVI)

The map below provides a general idea of the risk potential for certain areas of Lancaster County. This is done by creating an index using seven demographic variables: age over 60, age over 60 living alone, below poverty line, race other than white, English language barrier, between 18-64 with disability, and education of less than high school diploma. And data from the National Land Cover Database which shows developed land and natural land types to simulate the urban heat island effect. To better understand environmental and social vulnerabilities, the study classifies Lancaster County census tracts into "small metro" and "medium metro" categories based on the Rural-Urban Commuting Area (RUCA) codes for urbanization levels. The study found that heat vulnerability patterns vary with urbanization levels. In urban areas, disability was a significant factor in heat vulnerability, whereas in rural areas, lower education and non-white race were more critical. Environmental factors also differed, with urban areas experiencing significant heat intensification due to developed land types, while rural areas showed varied heat intensification based on land cover. Heat vulnerability mapping revealed that high and low vulnerabilities clustered in highly urbanized areas, while less urbanized areas lacked such spatial clustering.

This map was developed by Babak Fard and other researchers from the University of Nebraska Medical Center in Omaha. The epidemiology team at LLCHD added the location of recreation centers, senior centers, libraries, and the cultural centers involved in the Cultural Centers Collaborative. This map may help identify certain areas of Lancaster County where individuals are potentially at higher risk of heat-related illnesses to help inform interventions. More information can be found here: [Mapping Heat Vulnerability Index Based on Different Urbanization Levels in Nebraska](#)



Heat Vulnerability Index by Census Tracts, Lancaster County, 2024

- | | |
|---------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Census Tract Scores | ▲ Library |
| 0 - 7 | ■ Rec Center |
| 8 - 9 | ◆ Senior Center |
| 10 - 11 | ⬛ City Limit |
| 12 - 13 | ▭ Neighborhood_Association_Contacts |
| 14 - 17 | |



Jalalzadeh Fard, B., Mahmood, R., Hayes, M., Rowe, C., Abadi, A. M., Shulski, M., Medcalf, S., Lookadoo, R., & Bell, J. E. (2021). Mapping heat vulnerability index based on different urbanization levels in Nebraska, USA. *GeoHealth*, 5(10), e2021GH000478.

6. Emergency Operations Center (EOC) Activation Guide for Heat Response

The purpose of this annex is to provide general guidance for Emergency Operations Center (EOC) activation related to heat response.

LEVEL 3:

- **Activation Criteria:** Heat Advisory or Extreme Heat Warning
- **Emergency Operations Center (EOC):**
 - Level 3 (remote/monitoring activation): Activation that affects only the Emergency Management director and EOC staff to monitor and address the situation.
 - Level 3 Remote: Emergency Management staff are not in the EOC but are actively monitoring the situation and will report to the EOC as needed.

LEVEL 2:

- **Activation Criteria:** Heat Advisory or Extreme Heat Warning, and additional high impact event(s)
- **Emergency Operations Center (EOC):**
 - Level 2: Activation of select agencies and departments whose response is directly affected by the event that triggered the activation.

LEVEL 1:

- **Activation criteria:** Heat Advisory or Extreme Heat Warning, and additional high impact event(s) with high Emergency Support Function (ESF) demand
- **Emergency Operations Center (EOC):**
 - Level 1: Activation of all agencies and departments required to staff ESF positions in the EOC. This includes those elected officials identified in the Local Emergency Operations Plan (LEOP).