

REPORT

Fire & Rescue Services

To: Mayor Cote and Members of Council **Date:** July 11, 2022

From: Erin Williams **File:** 2113237
Acting Fire Chief

Item #: 2022-528

Subject: 2022 Heat Response Planning Update

RECOMMENDATION

THAT Council receive this report for information.

PURPOSE

This report is to inform Council of the updated plans and initiatives for response to extreme heat through the rest of the summer of 2022

SUMMARY

The Emergency Management Office (EMO) is continuing to actively follow weather patterns and trends as we move through the summer months. As a result of the increase in extreme heat emergencies, Provincial Authorities have created a new plan called BC Provincial Heat Alert and Response System. The EMO has devised our heat response plan accordingly to align with the guidance and suggestions of the Provincial plan.

Our current focus at this time in continued preparation for extreme heat response is on outreach and collaboration within the community.

BACKGROUND

Extreme Heat is a period of un-seasonally high temperatures, typically accompanied by high humidity and lack of night-time cooling. Extreme Heat can last for several days, and the severity of the situation may be further complicated if accompanied by poor air quality (e.g. during wildland fire smoke episodes or urban 'smog').

The EMO has reviewed and updated the Extreme Heat Response Plan which will be reviewed annually to ensure that risk of extreme heat in the City of New Westminster is managed by a series of temporary mitigation strategies and initiatives during an extreme heat event.

EXISTING POLICY AND PRACTICE

The City’s extreme heat response plan has been updated based on actions from last year and the brief heat we experienced at the end of June of this year.

ANALYSIS

Outreach Update

Currently, the EMO is focused on reaching our vulnerable populations, isolated residents and providing heat related education. We have been working with the New Westminster Homelessness Coalition Society, Senior Services Society and Fraser Health Home Health to ensure we are providing timely communication when we are responding during an event. We are also reaching out to other non-profits / faith based organizations to collaborate our efforts and create partnerships in response to an extreme heat event and or any future emergency event. This could be in the form of providing communication into the community to coordinating additional cooling spaces, resources and or supplies.

Resources

The EMO and the City’s Purchasing Division have been actively sourcing suppliers for air conditioned buses and messaging boards. We are creating an updated list in the event these may be required during an emergency response.

Alerting Update

The EMO has also reviewed and updated our Extreme Heat Response Plan to align with the new Provincial Extreme Heat Preparedness Guide (HARS). This guide focuses on two alert levels. For each alert level, the City has developed responses which augment those of Provincial Authorities.

- 1) Level 1 Heat Warning - Can be issued up to one week in advance of forecasted temperatures that are anticipated to have an actual of $\geq 27^{\circ}\text{C}$ at YVR. The Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) will be activated to a LEVEL One for monitoring and awareness during the Heat Warning and will support a coordinated response form City Departments by initiating the following for a response:
 - Coordinate with City designated facilities the possible extension of hours if deemed necessary.

- Advertise the location and hours of City owned cooling venues available in the City; Century House, Queensborough Community Centre, Anvil Centre and NW Library
 - Provide communication to not-for-profits, Fraser Health, other organizations directly.
 - EMO to be available to help support not-for-profits with water distribution if required.
- 2) Level 2 Extreme Heat Warning / Special Weather Statement in Effect - An extreme heat warning / Special Weather Statement has been issued by Environment Canada when there are three days of forecasted extreme heat, and/or the Health Authority or the City of New Westminster deems there to be a need for an initiated response. The following actions will be taken in this level of response:
- Coordinate with City designated facilities including pools & spray parks the need for extension of hours.
 - Advertise the location and hours of City owned cooling venues available in the City; Century House, Queensborough Community Centre, Anvil Centre and NW Library
 - Provide additional community outreach and engagement with vulnerable population and the groups that support them.
 - Distribute resources to the public such as water, locations will be identified during the event.
 - Increase on duty first responders as required.

During a Level 2 activation, the extreme heat criteria indicates temperatures at which the expected risk to the public is extremely high. This level of alert triggers additional responses from the Health Authority, local government and partner organizations as well as public messaging to strongly encourage individuals and communities to be aware of the risk and take action to stay cool.

Outdoor Cooling Strategy

Parks & Recreation staff are currently developing an Outdoor Cooling Strategy to identify best practices related to outdoor cooling and ensuring equitable access for all residents to cooling infrastructure in parks and open spaces during the hot summer months. As part of the Strategy, staff have developed a map with information for residents indicating where to 'cool off' which includes locations for water stations, outdoor pools and spray parks as well as green infrastructure (i.e. parks and natural areas with mature trees/ forested areas that create cool shade). In addition to launching the Outdoor Cooling Map, staff will be installing up to 15 temporary misting stations and bottle fillers in priority neighbourhoods later this summer (anticipated in late July/ early August).

The next steps in developing the Outdoor Cooling Strategy include:

- **July 2022-** Complete mapping of existing outdoor ‘cooling’ infrastructure and identify gaps.
- **August 2022-** Launch online survey/community engagement process to confirm priority areas and collect ideas for outdoor cooling.
- **September/ October 2022** – Summarize community input and develop a draft Outdoor Cooling Strategy
- **October/November 2022-** Finalize Strategy and Implementation Plan for Council’s consideration.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

Staff continue to consult with Emergency Management BC in order to understand the impacts of climate change such as the Heat Dome in 2021. Staff are also in the process of developing an increased response with Fraser Heath during emergency events, which will help guide future climate related atmospheric events.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There is no expenditure at this time except the allocation of regular staff time to monitor weather conditions, assess the developing risk, and initiate preparations. Following an activation additional financial resources may be required to implement mitigation measures depending on the further development of extreme heat conditions.

INTERDEPARTMENTAL LIAISON

Interdepartmental liaison to date has coordinated with the establishment of a heat strategy working group. This group consists of representatives from Parks & Recreation, Library, Anvil Centre, Police, Fire, Community & Social Planning, Finance, Corporate Communications, Engineering, Human Resources and the EMO. Interaction with other departments will be incorporated if the City & the Province activate their respective EOCs.

OPTIONS

The following options are presented for Council’s consideration:

1. That Council receive this report for information; or
2. That Council provide alternative direction to staff.

Staff recommends Option 1.

CONCLUSION

The EMO will monitor the forecasts and continue our efforts in pre-planning for extreme heat with internal City Departments. We will also continue to mobilize and provide outreach targeting vulnerable populations, residents, faith based and non- profits and provide information on ways to prepare for and become more resilient in extreme heat.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 – Extreme Heat Info Flyer May 2022

APPROVALS

This report was prepared by:
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