

15 practical actions to reduce your risks related to extreme heat

Flood and fire may be Canada's most costly natural disasters, but extreme heat is the "silent killer". If an extreme heat event coincided with an extended power outage – with no electricity supply to air conditioners and fans – lack of preparedness could result in widespread fatalities.

Canadians need to begin taking extreme heat as seriously as they do extreme cold.

Facing the heat is a growing challenge in Canada. We all have a responsibility to reduce our own risks from extreme heat, and an opportunity to help protect others.

The good news is the [Intact Centre on Climate Adaptation](#) at the University of Waterloo has developed practical tips for individuals, home and property owners, and communities at large to reduce the risks related to extreme heat.

Check out some practical actions you can take to reduce extreme heat risks and [read the report](#) in full for more details.

Change your behaviour

Actions by individuals to encourage "passive" cooling (cooling that does not use energy):



- **Work with neighbours, friends and family to plan ahead for the risks of extreme heat**
- **Arrange to receive public heat warnings directly to your smartphone**
Environment and Climate Change Canada's "WeatherCAN" app sends out heat alerts and is [free to download](#).
- **Learn how to use natural ventilation**
Natural-draft ventilation: allow cooler air to enter a building at its base and let hotter air exit through the top. *Cross-ventilation:* open doors or windows on opposite walls to encourage air currents.
- **Reduce "waste" heat with energy-efficient appliances and LED light bulbs**



- **Make better use of cooler areas of your home for living, eating and sleeping**
Consider spending more time in your basement, lower floors, and rooms that receive less sunlight.

For individuals, investing in extreme heat resilience can result in direct co-benefits such as improved productivity, lower energy bills, and improved comfort, well-being and mental health.

Improve buildings and infrastructure

Actions by property owners and managers to encourage “passive” cooling:



- **Enhance insulation and airtightness to better regulate temperature**
- **Use concrete, brick, stone and tile finishes that absorb heat**
These surfaces help regulate air temperature by retaining heat in winter and staying cool in the summer.
- **Install temperature and humidity monitors or controls**
“Smart” thermostats can automatically activate ventilation when the temperature and humidity reach certain thresholds, and avoid wasting electricity when cooling is not required.



- **Understand building-scale vulnerabilities to extreme heat**

Examine infrastructure, operations, employees and tenants, undertake a climate-vulnerability assessment and then develop a climate adaptation plan.

- **Provide information, and identify and support vulnerable occupants**

Consult with local public health agencies for advice and heat-health educational materials to share through face-to-face discussions, tenant meetings, newsletters, social media and posters.

Property owners and managers investing in extreme heat resilience may enjoy such co-benefits as lower operating costs, better experiences for tenants, higher property values and rent premiums, and lower vacancy rates.

Work with each other and nature

Actions by communities to encourage “passive” cooling.



- **Reduce artificial surfaces, expand vegetated areas and water bodies, and absorb more water**
- **Use education and outreach to encourage preventive action and set up support programs for vulnerable populations**
Provide information for different stakeholders about the risks of extreme heat and preventive measures that can reduce these risks before an extreme heat event occurs.
- **Provide incentives to increase passive cooling and reduce “waste” heat (e.g. by subsidizing tree planting or home retrofits)**



- **Develop extreme heat emergency plan**

Including: the broadcast of public information messages; how to respond to power outages; and “check-in” programs for vulnerable populations.

- **Expand artificial shade with a variety of structures**

Including portable items (such as canopies, tents and umbrellas), canopies and free-standing open-air structures with roofs.

For communities, investing in extreme heat resilience can result in co-benefits such as improved air quality, flood and erosion protection, and improved habitats and biodiversity.

Read the report, [Irreversible Extreme Heat: Protecting Canadians and Communities from a Lethal Future](#) by Joanna Eyquem and Dr. Blair Feltmate, for a complete list of all the practical actions Canadians can undertake to reduce extreme heat risks.

<https://newsroom.intactfc.com/2022-06-20-15-practical-actions-to-reduce-your-risks-related-to-extreme-heat>