

Excessive Heat Preparation, Planning, and Mitigation

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Excessive heat awareness plays a pivotal role in safeguarding the well-being and resilience of Central Texas communities. As the region faces the growing challenges of hotter temperatures and prolonged dry spells, understanding and preparing for these extreme weather conditions become paramount. By raising awareness about the potential risks, adopting proactive measures, and implementing effective strategies, Central Texans can better adapt to the changing climate and mitigate the adverse impacts of excessive heat and drought on public health, agriculture, water resources, and overall quality of life.

PREPARE

Prepare for excessive heat in your community by taking the following steps:

- **Know How to Stay Hydrated:** You need to drink enough water to prevent heat illness. An average person needs to drink about 3/4 of a gallon of water daily (Apx. 12 cups).
 - Avoid sugary, caffeinated and alcoholic drinks.
 - If you are sweating a lot, combine water with snacks or a sports drink to replace the salt and minerals you lose in sweat.
- **Early Warning Systems:** Visit the [Warn Central Texas page](#) for efficient heat alert systems that notify vulnerable populations and provide guidance on protective actions during heatwaves.
- **Community Cooling Centers:** Be sure to stay up to date on where community cooling centers are in your area. Find the City of Austin's Cooling Center locations [here](#).
- **Learn the Signs of Heat Related Illness:** Typical [symptoms](#) of heat related illness include:
 - Heat Stroke: High body temperature, headache, dizziness, nausea, confusion, passing out, hot skin
 - Heat Exhaustion: Heavy sweating, cold skin, fast weak pulse, nausea, muscle cramps
 - Heat Cramps: Heavy sweating during intense exercise, muscle pain or spasms
- **Learn to Treat Heat Related Illness:** Follow these [steps](#) to mitigate the effects of heat related illnesses:
 - Heat Stroke: Call 911 immediately, move the person to a cooler place, lower the persons temperature with cool cloths/cool bath, DO NOT give the person anything to drink;
 - Heat Exhaustion: Move to a cool place, loosen clothes, lower your temperature with cool cloths/cool bath, and sip water. Get medical help right away if you are throwing up or have prolonged symptoms.
 - Heat Cramps: Stop physical activity and move to a cool place, drink water/sports drink, wait for cramps to go away before engaging in more activity.

PLAN

A well-developed plan is essential for effectively managing excessive heat events:

- **Make a Plan to Stay Cool:** Do not rely only on electric fans during extreme heat. When temperatures are in the high 90s, fans may not prevent heat-related illness. Taking a cool shower or bath or moving to an air-conditioned place is a much better way to cool off.
 - If you have air conditioning, ensure it is in working order.
 - If you do not have air conditioning, make a plan to spend time in a location with AC. Find information on community cooling centers in the City of Austin [here](#).
- **Develop an Emergency Plan:** Develop an emergency plan by filling out Ready's "[Make a Plan Form](#)," which will automatically generate a PDF for you to share with family and friends.
- **Gather Emergency Supplies and Create a "Go-Kit":** Create a "Go-Kit" with essential items such as water, non-perishable food, first-aid kits, needed medications, flashlight, extra batteries, extra car keys, credit cards, clothing, and other irreplaceable items. Learn how to make your "Go-Kit" at www.ready.gov/kit.
- **Vulnerable Populations:** Identify and plan to check on vulnerable populations in your household or neighborhood, such as the elderly, young children, and individuals with pre-existing health conditions, in heat emergency planning.

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MITIGATE

When excessive heat occurs, there is no way for you to completely stop it. However, there are certain actionable steps you can take to mitigate the impact to you and your home. Consider taking the following steps to retrofit your home for heat:

- **Paint your Home a Light Color:** Dark color attracts and absorbs heat from the sun, so a great long-term solution for keeping your home cool is to paint the exterior of your home white or another light, reflective color.
- **Check your Home's Insulation:** Ensure your home is properly insulated to keep the heat out and the cool air in.
- **Landscape with a Purpose:** Consider tactical landscaping like planting trees or growing a shade vine to help provide shade and keep yourself, and your house, cool.
- **Keep your AC in Perfect Shape:** A clogged air conditioner or a fan weighed down by too much dust can operate at a much lower capacity than one that is cleaned regularly and kept free of gunk. Ensure your AC is running perfectly by inspecting your unit. [Follow this guide for more information.](#)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- The United States Environmental Protection Agency's "[Adapting to Heat](#)" website contains useful information on mitigating excessive heat.
- Ready.gov's Extreme Heat Mitigation [guide](#) contains information on how to prepare for and stay safe during excessive heat events.
- The City of Austin's Urban Heat and Cool Spaces [website](#) contains information on ways to contribute to the cooling of Austin.

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