



**Alliance for Heat
Resilience and Health**
Addressing the health harms of extreme heat.

2026 Heat Safety Awareness Toolkit

*An action guide for communities,
organizations, and advocates*





Alliance for Heat Resilience and Health

Addressing the health harms of extreme heat.

The [Alliance for Heat Resilience and Health](#) (AHRH) is a coalition of over a dozen national organizations working in collaboration to advance protective standards, proactive emergency plans, and local and state-based engagement.

Its members include:

Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments
American Lung Association
American Medical Association
American Public Health Association
American Thoracic Society
Federation of American Scientists
Health Care Without Harm
The Medical Society Consortium on Climate and Health
National Association of Community Health Centers
Natural Resources Defense Council
Physicians for Social Responsibility

This toolkit was created by Shivank Jhanji, MESM, a consultant at Turning Green. The Alliance for Heat Resilience and Health thanks him for his outstanding work. The Alliance also extends its appreciation to Grace Wickerson and the [Federation of American Scientists](#) for providing expert insights on the policy priority areas.

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Introduction

Key Dates:

April 22-23, 2026 - [2026 New Mexico Extreme Heat, Health, and Resiliency Summit](#)

May 18-22, 2026 - [National Integrated Heat Health Information System \(NIHHIS\) Heat Safety Week](#) & [Delaware Heat Awareness Week](#)

June 2026 - Federation of American Scientists launches State and Local Heat Policy Agenda. Support the agenda by signing on [here](#).

Why Heat Safety Matters

Extreme heat now kills more people in the United States than any other weather-related hazard. As climate change accelerates, heatwaves are becoming more frequent, longer-lasting, and more severe. These events strain public health systems, worsen health inequities, and put frontline communities — especially outdoor workers and those without access to cooling — at grave risk.

Key facts:

- Heat-related illness is the [leading cause of weather-related deaths](#) in the U.S., and workers are particularly at risk.
- [13.2 million households](#) in the U.S. report being too hot for more than a day.
- [80 million people](#) struggle to pay their utility bills.
- A cool space is the [most protective strategy](#) against heat illness.

Workers face some of the most acute risks. The [federal government reports](#) more than 3,000 injuries and more than 30 deaths annually from heat, while independent studies have attributed [more than 28,000 injuries](#) a year to high heat days, with risk accelerating above 85°F. Heat protections can [prevent deaths](#), reduce [workers' compensation claims](#), decrease [employee turnover](#), and even [increase productivity](#)

Children are also particularly vulnerable. Extreme heat impacts [their health](#) and [brain function](#), and children often lack the power, agency, and knowledge to protect themselves from hot environments. They need spaces to grow, learn, and play that are capable of protecting them from heat. Yet, many schools and childcare facilities lack adequate cooling.

Hazardous heat is [happening earlier](#) and [lasting longer](#), affecting every U.S. state. Places that prepare for acute and chronic heat can [prevent deaths](#) and avoid [infrastructure failures](#) and [economic losses](#), while creating more livable communities where residents can thrive. But too many communities — particularly those that have been historically overburdened by pollution and disinvestment — are being left to face this threat without adequate support or planning.

About This Toolkit

This toolkit was developed by the [Alliance for Heat Resilience and Health](#) (AHRH) to help communities, organizations, and advocates take meaningful action around the 2026 National Integrated Heat Health Information System (NIHHIS) [Heat Safety Week](#) (May 18–22, 2026). It is designed for anyone who wants to raise awareness about extreme heat and health and support policies that protect the people most at risk. Let the AHRH know how you are taking action by filling out this form [here](#).

The toolkit is structured around three levels of engagement:

Level 1: Social Media	Amplify heat safety messages during NIHHIS Heat Safety Week (May 18–22). Share content, use #HeatSafety, and help spread the word.
Level 2: Proclamation	Request an official proclamation from your mayor or governor recognizing Heat Safety Week, using our step-by-step guide and templates.
Level 3: Legislation	Explore local and state policy options to protect your community from extreme heat, with real-world examples.

Levels of Engagement

Level 1: Amplify Heat Safety on Social Media

About NIIHIS Heat Safety Week

The National Integrated Heat Health Information System (NIIHIS) is hosting a [social media week](#) from May 18–22, 2026, to raise awareness about the dangers of heat and provide safety tips. Throughout the week, federal agencies and partners will share heat safety content according to daily themes.

NIIHIS encourages states, local communities, and organizations to get involved by following along with the campaign, posting their own content with the hashtag #HeatSafety across platforms, and re-posting messages from NIIHIS' account on X.

How to Participate

- Follow NIIHIS on X and share their posts throughout the week.
- Post your own heat safety content using #HeatSafety across your social media.
- Encourage others in your community to help spread the word about heat.
- If your organization is planning to participate, consider filling out the [NIIHIS interest form](#) to let them know.

Social Media Quick Tips

- Always use #HeatSafety in every post to connect with the national campaign.
- On Friday, May 22, also add #DontFryDay to your posts.
- Tag local officials and community partners to expand your reach.
- Share personal stories and local data to make your content more compelling.
- NIIHIS has a [Communicating About Heat webpage](#) with key messages, statistics, infographics, and social media toolkits you can use when developing content.

Daily Themes: May 18–22, 2026

Use these daily themes to guide your posting and align with the national campaign. See [NIHHIS' Heat Safety Week social media campaign webpage](#) for ideas, examples, and more resources on what to post on each of these days.

Monday, May 18	What Is Heat-related Illness? Share information explaining the symptoms of heat stroke and heat exhaustion. Remind your followers that heat stroke is a medical emergency. Share resources about heat risks in vehicles and how to keep children and pets safe. Provide statistics on heat-related illnesses in your community.
Tuesday, May 19	Heat Safety Tips Share specific actions people can take to prevent and treat heat stroke and heat exhaustion: staying in air conditioning, finding shade when outdoors, and drinking plenty of water. Share cooling center locations and hours in your community. Remind decision-makers to use heat tools such as NWS HeatRisk.
Wednesday, May 20	Check on Family, Friends, Teammates & Colleagues Remind people to check on friends, family, and community members. Encourage athletes to check on teammates and limit outdoor activity in extreme heat. Remind people to check on colleagues who work outdoors. Raise awareness about populations at high risk.
Thursday, May 21	Outdoor Recreation & Heat Safety The campaign falls the week before Memorial Day. Share tips including: wearing loose, light-weight, light-colored clothing; drinking more water than usual; pacing yourself during physical activity; taking frequent breaks in air conditioning and shade; and knowing the signs of heat-related illness.
Friday, May 22	Stay Safe in the Sun — Don't Fry Day In recognition of Don't Fry Day, raise awareness about sun safety outdoors. Share tips: seek shade, wear protective clothing, apply and reapply sunscreen. Use hashtag #DontFryDay.

Level 2: Help Enact a Local Proclamation

Why Proclamations Matter

A proclamation is an official declaration by a mayor, governor, or other elected official that formally recognizes a cause or issue as important to the community. Proclamations build public awareness, signal political support, and create momentum for further action.

Requesting a proclamation for Heat Safety Week requires no budget and can be completed in a few hours. As Delaware showed in 2025 when University of Delaware students successfully obtained a proclamation, it is entirely achievable, even for first-time advocates. To build momentum, the students also created a simple [Google Form](#) to invite organizations to sign on as supporters — an easy, low-lift strategy that helped spark broader engagement from over 30 partners across the state.

Step-by-Step: How to Request a Proclamation

1. Search your mayor's or governor's website for information on their proclamation process. If you cannot find it online, call the government office directly.
2. You will likely need to submit an online form or email someone in the government office to request the proclamation.
3. Use the Proclamation Template in this toolkit as your starting point. Customize the bracketed fields for your city, state, and official.
4. You may be asked to provide a brief explanation of why it is important to recognize Heat Safety Week, sometimes called a "Purpose for Proclamation" or "Reason for Recognition" statement. Draw on the facts and language in this toolkit.
5. Submit a Photo Op Request to the office of your governor or mayor to get a photo with the elected official who signed your proclamation. Details on how to arrange this will be found on your government's website.
6. Once the proclamation has been issued, use the Press Release Template in this toolkit to send a release to local media. Share the proclamation on social media using #HeatSafety.

Do not be discouraged if it takes several attempts to contact the office. Polite persistence is key to good advocacy. If the proclamation isn't finalized in time, proceed with Heat Safety Week anyway and engage partners to build on it next year!

Proclamation Template

Copy and customize the language below for your city or state. Replace all bracketed fields before submitting.

Heat Safety Week Proclamation

[City/State Name]

WHEREAS, extreme heat now kills more people in the United States than any other weather-related hazard, and as climate change accelerates, heatwaves are becoming more frequent, longer-lasting, and more severe; and

WHEREAS, heat-related illness is preventable, and public awareness is among the most powerful tools we have to protect our community members, especially outdoor workers, the elderly, children, and those without access to cooling; and

WHEREAS, the National Integrated Heat Health Information System (NIHHIS) has designated May 18–22, 2026, as National Heat Safety Week, a week-long campaign to raise awareness about the dangers of extreme heat and promote heat safety actions across the country; and

WHEREAS, communities, organizations, and individuals across *[State/City Name]* are encouraged to take action to protect their neighbors, colleagues, and loved ones from the dangers of extreme heat; and

WHEREAS, together we can protect the health, well-being, and safety of all residents of *[State/City Name]* during periods of extreme heat;

THEREFORE, I, *[Official Name]*, *[Official Title]* of *[State/City Name]*, do hereby proclaim May 18–22, 2026, as:

HEAT SAFETY WEEK

in *[State/City Name]*, and urge all citizens to observe this week with awareness-raising about heat safety, stewardship activities to protect vulnerable community members from extreme heat, and engagement with local resources and support.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Great Seal of the State of *[State/City Name]* to be affixed this ____ day of _____, 2026.

[Official Name]

[Official Title], *[State/City Name]*

Press Release Template

Once your proclamation has been issued, use this template to notify local media.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

[Insert Organization Name] | [Insert Date]

[Official Name] Proclaims May 18–22, 2026, as Heat Safety Week in [City/State Name]

[City, State], [Date] — [Official Name] has proclaimed May 18–22, 2026, as Heat Safety Week in [City/State Name] in recognition of the 2026 National Heat Safety Week campaign led by the National Integrated Heat Health Information System (NIHHIS). The proclamation was requested by [Insert Organization Name] to raise awareness about the dangers of extreme heat and the importance of heat safety for all community members.

Extreme heat now kills more Americans than any other weather-related hazard. Heat-related illness is preventable, and this proclamation sends a clear signal that [City/State Name] is committed to protecting its residents, especially those most vulnerable, including outdoor workers, the elderly, children, and those without access to cooling.

We would like to thank [Official Name] for joining the heat safety movement. By signing this proclamation, [Official Name] has joined communities across the country that are committed to protecting residents from the growing threat of extreme heat. Visit [Insert Organization Website] to learn what you can do to support heat safety in [City/State Name].

About [Insert Organization Name]

[Insert language describing your organization and/or group]

Media Contact: [Name] | [Email] | [Phone]

After the Proclamation: Amplify Your Win

- Share the proclamation on social media using #HeatSafety and tagging your elected official.
- Send a digital copy of the proclamation and your press release to local newspapers, television outlets, and radio stations.
- Use the moment to invite your community to get involved with heat safety actions and events during May 18-22.

- Consider sharing photos and stories with the [NIHHIS campaign](#) and the [Alliance for Heat Resilience and Health](#).

Spotlight: [Delaware's First Heat Awareness Week](#)

Delaware is celebrating its first-ever Heat Awareness Week during May 18–22, 2026 — the same dates as the national NIHHIS campaign. The week was initiated by University of Delaware students in partnership with the [Mid-Atlantic Alliance for Climate and Health](#), and a proclamation was issued by the Delaware Governor on December 30, 2025. If Delaware can do it, your community can too.

Level 3: Consider Local and State Legislation

From Awareness to Action: Why Policy Matters

Social media campaigns and proclamations are powerful tools for raising awareness, but lasting protection from extreme heat requires policy change. Local and state governments have significant authority to protect residents from heat, and many places around the country are already acting.

This section highlights five high-impact policy areas. Each of them is grounded in real examples from states and cities that have already taken action to help spark ideas for what might be possible in your community. These are drawn from the State and Local Heat Policy Agenda by the [Federation of American Scientists](#), which will launch in June 2026.

Coming June 2026: The State and Local Heat Policy Agenda Launch by Federation of American Scientists

A comprehensive State and Local Heat Policy Agenda is launching in June 2026 with detailed policy recommendations, supporting evidence, and guidance for policymakers across all levels of government. This toolkit highlights five key priorities to help your creative energy start flowing. We encourage you to explore the full agenda at launch for deeper guidance. If any of this material is used in your advocacy, please credit the policy agenda and include a link to the website. You can also support the agenda by signing on [here](#).

Five Policy Priority Areas

1. Establish the right to cooling.

Every household should have guaranteed access to active and passive cooling systems that keep their home at safe, comfortable temperatures. This can be achieved by policies like:

- Setting locally relevant maximum indoor temperature standards,
- Requiring that cooling systems (both mechanical and passive) be present, effective, and in good working condition, and
- Ensuring that renters and property owners can make home alterations for cooling, such as installing window units and adding shade.

Real-world examples:

- [California](#) - enacted legislation sets a maximum indoor air temperature threshold of 82F for new construction.
- [Arizona](#) - enacted legislation that gives mobile home tenants the right to install cooling systems.
- [Illinois](#) - enacted legislation that requires state-funded affordable housing to provide working air conditioning (AC) for tenants
- [Washington](#) - enacted legislation that gives renters and mobile home tenants the right to install portable cooling devices.

2. Protect energy access during hot weather.

Every household should be protected from utility disconnection and should also be able to afford the energy needed to keep homes cool. This can be achieved by policies like:

- Utility disconnection protections that cover their jurisdiction's heat season and out-of-season hot weather,
- Auto-enrolling eligible customers in energy affordability programs, such as percentage of income payment plans or discount rates, and
- Offering one-time bill assistance programs for customers at risk of disconnection.

A cool space is the most protective strategy against heat illness, but it is only available to those who can keep the lights and air conditioning on.

Real-world examples:

- [Arizona Disconnection Rules](#) - state-level protections preventing utility shutoffs during heat season (June 1 to October 15).
- [Ohio Home Energy Assistance Summer Crisis Program](#) - one-time emergency energy assistance during the summer.
- [Washington State offers electricity discount rates](#) for low-income households.
- [Jackson, Mississippi “Water and Sewer Ratepayers Bill of Rights”](#) - prevents water disconnection when the National Weather Service has issued an excessive heat warning.

3. Secure heat protections in all workplaces, like paid rest, water, and shade requirements.

Every worker should be guaranteed paid rest, water and shade access, heat-acclimatization periods, and, if applicable, cooling in their employer-provided housing. This can be achieved by establishing and guaranteeing paid rest, water, and shade protections triggered by science-backed and locally relevant thresholds. For governments that cannot pass standards, they can pursue other mechanisms like incentive-based approaches. Finally, sick leave policies should be created or expanded and include heat waves as an eligible event.

Real-world examples:

- [Oregon](#) - adopted permanent rules for heat illness prevention. It also has a [paid sick leave policy](#) that includes extreme heat events as an eligible event.
- [Boston](#), [Phoenix](#), [Tucson](#), and [New Orleans](#) - passed local ordinances establishing worker protections.
- [Austin, Texas](#) - developed a creative incentive-based approach to encourage heat breaks for outdoor workers, avoiding state preemption.
- [California](#) - proposed legislation to expand farmworker sick leave to include climate-fueled extreme weather events.

4. Protect children: Keep kids safe from extreme heat at school and childcare.

Every child should be guaranteed a cool environment, including classrooms, playgrounds, athletic facilities, and school buses. Every school and childcare facility

should have plans, training, and policies for hot weather, including school operations, recess, and sporting and outdoor activities. This can be achieved through policies like:

- Locally relevant maximum indoor and tiered outdoor temperature thresholds for all schools and childcare facilities,
- Heat preparedness plans to guide response activities when temperature thresholds are crossed — such as modifying outdoor practices, closing early, or calling a “heat day”, functioning cooling on school buses at a minimum, and
- Assessments of bus stop locations for heat risk.

Real-world examples:

- [New York State](#) - enacted a law setting maximum indoor temperatures for schools.
- [Washington, D.C.](#) and [South Carolina](#) - regulate temperatures in childcare facilities through licensure.
- [Boston Public Schools](#) - developed an indoor air quality and temperature monitoring sensor dashboard.
- [West Virginia](#) - Emergency Medical Services (EMS) policies to respond to heat stroke during athletic events.

5. Plan for Heat: Require Local and State Heat Emergency Planning.

Every government should have plans for annual heat preparedness and long-term risk mitigation, as well as strategies to coordinate with surrounding governments on efforts. This can be achieved through policies like:

- Annual response operations plans,
- Long-term risk mitigation plans,
- Standalone heat action plans, and
- Incorporation of extreme heat throughout required plans, such as hazard mitigation, transportation, and capital planning.

Real-world examples:

- [Arizona](#), [New York](#), [New Jersey](#), and [California](#) - all have heat action plans.
- [Nevada](#) - enacted legislation that requires large municipalities to plan for extreme heat.
- [Arizona](#) - established a Chief Heat Officer position. [Phoenix](#) has a dedicated Heat Office.

- [South Carolina](#), [Delaware](#), and [North Carolina](#) - have all declared official Heat Safety Awareness Weeks.
- Additional resources available at heatplans.org.

Where to Go From Here

These five policy areas are just the beginning. The full State and Local Heat Policy Agenda — launching June 2026 — covers additional priority areas including enabling a heat-resilient housing supply, upgrading existing homes for extreme heat, managing large load impacts on energy grids, creating incentives for workplace safety best practices, and financing heat-resilient infrastructure.

When you are ready to go deeper on any of these issues, the full agenda will be your guide. You can support the agenda by signing on [here](#). And remember: even a single conversation with a local official, a letter to the editor, or a social media post can be the first step toward real policy change in your community.

Additional Resources

Heat Safety and Awareness

<p><u>NIHHIS Heat Safety Week</u></p>	<p>The official 2026 NIHHIS Heat Safety Week campaign page. Includes the interest form, social media toolkit, and links to the Communicating About Heat resource hub.</p>
<p><u>Alliance for Heat Resilience and Health (AHRH)</u></p>	<p>A coalition of major national organizations — including the Medical Society Consortium on Climate and Health, the American Public Health Association, Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments, Federation of American Scientists, the Natural Resources Defense Council, and Physicians for Social Responsibility — working to advance heat protections at the state and local</p>

	level.
<u>2026 NM Extreme Heat Summit</u>	A two-session virtual event on April 22–23, 2026 (9–11:30 AM MT each day), featuring leading experts on extreme heat for health professionals.
<u>Delaware Heat Awareness Week</u>	Delaware’s first-ever Heat Awareness Week, organized by the Mid-Atlantic Alliance for Climate and Health and University of Delaware students. A model for launching a Heat Awareness Week in your state.
<u>NRDC Report: In the Hot Seat</u>	This report provides an overview of the disaster declaration process, explores the reasons why it is not a likely or effective vehicle for delivering funding to states and local governments, and recommends the immediate steps that state and local governments should take to increase their resilience to deadly heat.
<u>APHA Affiliate Heat Survey Report</u>	This survey highlights a growing crisis that public health leaders see playing out as summers become longer and hotter: States often lack the tools, funding, and political will to keep people safe from extreme heat. It also points to a path forward.
<u>Heat Emergencies: Prevention, Diagnosis, and Management Harvard CME Course</u>	This course will equip clinicians with the knowledge to diagnose, treat, and prevent heat-related illnesses through a comprehensive, evidence-based virtual course covering thermal physiology, epidemiology, and management strategies.

Worker Protections

<u>OSHA Heat Standard Action Toolkit</u>	Developed in October 2024 by a coalition including APHA, American Lung Association, Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments, American Thoracic Society, Federation of American Scientists, Medical Society Consortium on Climate and Health, and Physicians for Social Responsibility. Includes social media guidance,
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	newsletter templates, and action alert links for supporting OSHA’s proposed rule to protect approximately 36 million workers from extreme heat.
<u>NRDC Occupational Heat Safety Resource</u>	A resource from NRDC that maps which states have existing occupational heat safety standards, useful for understanding what already exists in your state.

Letter to the Editor Template and Op-Ed Guidance

Letter to the Editor (LTE) Template

As a health professional, I am concerned by the growing threat extreme heat presents to [state, city, community].

Extreme heat now kills more people in the United States than any other weather-related hazard, and the number of heat-related illnesses is even higher. [insert sentence on how extreme heat is harming health in your local area/state]. These impacts fall most heavily on children, outdoor workers, people with chronic illnesses, the elderly, and those without access to cooling.

The good news is that this harm is preventable—if we act before heat hits. Places that prepare for extreme heat can help save lives, reduce strain on hospitals and infrastructure, avoid economic losses, and build healthier, more resilient neighborhoods.

Together, we can make heat safety a public health priority and ensure every resident has the resources needed to stay safe as temperatures rise because of climate change.

[Name, credentials]

[City/State]

Op-Ed Guidance

Outline

1. How are you seeing extreme heat show up in your patients or communities?
 - a. Share an anecdote
2. Why are you talking about this issue?
 - a. Extreme heat is the deadliest weather-related hazard
 - b. Cases of heat-related illness are high
 - c. Specific populations are at greater risk

3. What is Heat Safety Week? How are you/people in your community taking action?
4. What are the ongoing needs/solutions for your community?
 - a. Can use the policy suggestions from the [toolkit](#) or provide your own:
 - i. Establish the right to cooling
 - ii. Protect energy access during extreme heat events.
 - iii. Secure heat protections in all workplaces, like paid rest, water, and shade requirements.
 - iv. Protect children: Keep kids safe from extreme heat at school and childcare.
 - v. Plan for Heat: Require Local and State Heat Emergency Planning.
5. What is your ask/call to action?
 - a. More health professionals educating themselves and their patients on heat safety
 - b. More health professionals speaking out and advocating for solutions
 - c. Elected officials or governments enacting policies/solutions

Key Messaging and Evidence

- The National Integrated Heat Health Information System (NIHHIS) has designated May 18–22, 2026, as National Heat Safety Week, a week-long campaign to raise awareness about the dangers of extreme heat and promote heat safety actions across the country.
- Heat-related illness is the [leading cause of weather-related deaths](#) in the U.S.
- [13.2 million households](#) in the U.S. report being too hot for more than a day.
- [80 million people](#) struggle to pay their utility bills.
- The elderly face high risks of mortality during heat waves from risk factors like chronic disease, impaired physiology, and social isolation.
- Workers face some of the most acute risks. Heat protections can [prevent deaths](#), reduce [workers' compensation claims](#), decrease [employee turnover](#), and even [increase productivity](#).
- Children are also particularly vulnerable. They need spaces to grow, learn, and play that are capable of protecting them from heat.
- Places that prepare for acute and chronic heat can [prevent deaths](#) and avoid [infrastructure failures](#) and [economic losses](#), while creating more livable communities where residents can thrive.

- Too many communities — particularly those that have been historically overburdened by pollution and disinvestment — are being left to face this threat without adequate support or planning.

Every action counts. Whether you share one social media post, request a proclamation, or start a conversation about local heat policy, you are part of a growing movement to make our communities safer, more resilient, and more just.