



## MEMORANDUM

**To:** Mayor and Council Members

**From:** Rey Arellano, Assistant City Manager

**Date:** June 28, 2022

**Subject:** **Actions in Preparation for Heat Advisory/Excessive Heat Warning**

The purpose of this memo is to provide awareness of the summer heat conditions and describe actions the City has taken in advance to prepare and respond during a heat emergency. If the community were placed under an Excessive Heat Advisory by the National Weather Service, this memo describes the actions the City will take, including the support that will be offered to our community.

### **Background**

The [Summer 2022 Climate Outlook for South-Central Texas](#) provided by the National Weather Service (NWS) calls for an above average summer for heat and drought. This year's first NWS Heat Advisory was issued June 6, 2022, much earlier than usual, and City staff began communicating with the public to prepare for higher temperatures. Five days later, on June 11<sup>th</sup> and June 12<sup>th</sup>, the Austin-Travis County region was placed under an Excessive Heat Warning which triggered the opening of overnight cooling centers. An Excessive Heat Warning occurs when the maximum heat index temperature is expected to be equal or greater than 113°F or the air temperature is expected to be equal or greater than 105°F for at least 2 days and overnight air temperatures will not drop below 75°F. As the heat wave continues, City staff will work together with Travis County and community partners to implement the Austin-Travis County Heat Plan in support our community during excessive heat conditions.

### **Austin-Travis County Heat Plan: Planning & Coordination**

The City has reviewed the Austin-Travis County Heat Plan with its partners to ensure everyone is aware of their roles and responsibilities. Our partners include all City and County Departments, Capital Metropolitan Transit Authority, American Red Cross, Austin Disaster Relief Network, AISD and Community Based Organizations.

The Austin-Travis County Heat Plan actions are divided into three phases:

- **Pre-Heat Advisory Phase.** Referred to as the Preparedness Phase and includes city/county departments, community partners, and community agencies carrying out multiple activities to prepare to respond to extreme heat events.
- **Heat Advisory Phase** - Activities focus on increasing surveillance and monitoring of vulnerable populations and the general public. Public information is also shared broadly through the media as well as through communication specifically directed to vulnerable populations through partnerships with existing groups and organizations.
- **Excessive Heat Phase** - Direct action is taken to ensure the health and safety of the population vulnerable to excessive heat. This requires a high-level coordination of activities and resources. Although there is an increase in monitoring activities, most of the activities focus on taking direct action to provide relief to those who are vulnerable to heat-related illnesses. In this phase, additional cooling locations are opened, or hours of operations are extended.

Generally speaking, specific actions taken during particular phases of the heat plan will be dependent on a variety of circumstances. A single day heat advisory will have a different response than a forecasted multi-day or weeklong heat advisory or excessive heat warning. Staff coordinates across departments, agencies, and with partners using HSEM Information Reports (*Attachment A: Sample HSEM Information Report*) and will keep the City Council informed via News Flashes (*Attachment B: News Flashes from June 2022*). Any adjustments to cooling center operations will be included in the News Flashes and up to date information will be maintained on [austintexas.gov/alerts](https://austintexas.gov/alerts). Depending on the situation, HSEM will balance safety and operational efficiency to provide the needed resources to the community.

### **Monitoring**

Austin Public Health is conducting syndromic surveillance and producing a situation report to drive content/information shared with City leadership, Council, partners, providers, and the public. The Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (HSEM) establishes a Situation Assessment team prior to the community reaching excessive heat levels. Once the National Weather Service issues a *heat advisory*, HSEM gathers partners to ensure readiness and discusses any obstacles or unmet needs in anticipation of an *excessive heat warning*. This coordination ensures that the city, county, and community can be ready to have cooling facilities open during the hours of excessive heat and specifically in locations where they will be needed the most.

### **Outreach**

Communication staff from HSEM, APH and EMS coordinate with peer departments and share messaging on social media. Depending on the conditions, this includes messages such as available cooling center locations during the day, recognizing heat illness and actions to take to prevent it, and protecting children, elderly, and pets during hot weather.

HSEM will also post to the Ready Central Texas app and, dependent on conditions, will post to the [www.austintexas.gov/alerts](http://www.austintexas.gov/alerts) page with information translated into the 11 priority languages, including American Sign Language (ASL).

### **Logistics**

Similar to our winter preparedness efforts from earlier this year, the HSEM Logistics Team has prepared Mission Ready Packages (MRP) to support heat emergencies. Prepositioned Shelter MRPs have been reconfigured to support opening of community shelters in the event of a widespread power outage. Cooling Station Supply MRPs have been prepared to aid the opening of cooling locations. Logistics Field personnel are ready to support cooling locations as necessary.

Cooling centers are operated during daylight hours to coincide with peak temperatures. Overnight cooling shelters are dependent upon widespread outages and estimated time of power restoration.

### **Power Restoration**

Austin Energy has crews on standby 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to respond immediately to outages, and most small, routine outages are restored within a short period of time. Lineworkers are well-trained and highly skilled and work to restore power as quickly and safely as possible, no matter the reason for the outage. More information on [how we restore power is available on Austin Energy's website](#).

### **Support for Medically Vulnerable Populations**

Other factors, such as power outages, may complicate extreme heat conditions on an individual level. Localized power outages are caused by a variety of factors, including storms, vehicle collisions, falling tree limbs or vegetation, and animals; and they can happen at any time.

Austin Energy offers a [Medically Vulnerable Registry](#) for customers with a long-term disease, ailment or critical illness. Residential customers who are eligible for the registry receive personal case management from the City of Austin and partnering social service agencies. While power outages may still affect a customer on the Medically Vulnerable Registry, under this program, Customer Assistance Program staff works with the registered customer to ensure they have backup plans in case of extended power outages, as well as an emergency contact on file, and have information about resources to get help, if needed.

If additional resources are needed, residents are encouraged to call 2-1-1 to be connected to social service agencies. 2-1-1 is a free, anonymous social service hotline that is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year and is poised to help with emergency services.

Austin Public Health will continue to expand its partnerships with community-based organizations to help identify and address social services needs as they arise.

## Next Steps

City departments collectively continue to incorporate lessons learned from previous emergency events and have improved our response capability. The City is monitoring regional conditions and is prepared to respond to heat emergencies. Please continue to share information with the public and urge them to prepare for all emergency situations.

All residents have the power to protect themselves, their loved ones, and our community in an emergency. The source of that super-power is planning ahead. Preparing for disasters in advance can have a big impact on personal safety and recovery in a crisis. Follow these four steps to get prepared:

1. Make a Plan
2. Build a Kit
3. Know your Neighbors
4. Stay Informed

For more information, visit [ReadyCentralTexas.org](https://www.readycentraltexas.org)

If you have any questions or request additional information, please contact Elise Renshaw at [elise.renshaw@austintexas.gov](mailto:elise.renshaw@austintexas.gov).

cc: Anne Morgan, Acting City Manager  
CMO Executive Team  
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## Attachments:

1. Sample HSEM Information Report
2. News Flashes from June 2022