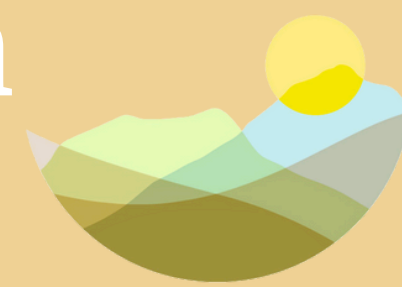


Extreme Heat Event Action Plan

January 2025

Written by Health Equity Council



HEALTH
EQUITY
COUNCIL
Serving Albuquerque and Bernalillo County

Executive Statement

During Summer 2024, the NM Department of Health reported 308 emergency room intakes in the metro area for heat-related illness. In an average year, Albuquerque experiences 60 days of temperatures above 90° F, and this trend has been increasing. Certain populations are disproportionately affected by extreme heat, including elders, children, people who work outdoors, are unsheltered or without air conditioning, and people with mental illness.

Background

Municipal and county government have taken some heat-health actions including the “2023 Climate Action Plan” report, including Climate Emergency Mobilization Efforts which mentions a strategy to “Provide public announcements to educate on climate challenges and opportunities for action.” Communication, however, is limited to “pull” systems – e.g. people must have phone or internet and have previously signed up to receive notifications. CABQ’s Sustainability division also maintained a HEAT ABCs website in 2024 with heat alerts and warnings, tips to stay cool, and collaborations. A review of these resources, however, showed that the facilities for people to find indoor relief need revision for 2025 (e.g. contact info, hours) and total capacity is insufficient and sparse, especially in the event of a mass power outage. Some sites reported being supplied by CABQ with sunscreen, but no other necessities as recommended below. Additionally, some city site managers were unaware in 2024 of their status as a cooling destination beforehand, with no additional staff or services provided.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Utilize ABQ Alert email/text system and Beat the Heat flyers to notify residents of extreme heat activation dates and amenities available during these events.

Recommendation 2: Implement a strategy to reach people who do not have internet or cellphone access with education and action plan resources by posting and presenting information in high foot-traffic locations such as day and overnight shelters, libraries, post offices, community centers, senior centers, and meal service sites.

Recommendation 3: Create a network of stationary and mobile cooling centers (including a staffing plan and activation notification protocol) with strategic geographic coverage focusing on heat island communities and weekend availability when many day shelters and libraries are closed. Integrate additional city resources such as the Albuquerque Community Safety team or contract support providers to connect people to other resources (e.g. ID workshops, SNAP assistance, etc.)

Recommendation 4: Ensure cooling centers have backup power systems, emergency kits, and pre-staged bulk water to prepare for potential electrical grid outages (The White House, 2024.)

Recommendation 5: Order emergency supplies to distribute for people who are unsheltered, and stock at cooling locations, such as handheld fans, ice packs, and cooling towels. Engaging street medics in mobile IV bag administration may help prevent ER admissions, as demonstrated in Phoenix with Circle the City programming (Snow, 2024).

Recommendation 6: Increase hydration for pedestrians, cyclists, and others who spend time outdoors by installation of outdoor public water fountains and bottle fill stations as standard features at parks, libraries, and community centers.

References:

1. Essence HRI Tracker. (2024). NM Department of Health. <https://nmdoh-reports.shinyapps.io/HeatRelatedIllnessDashboard/>
2. City of Albuquerque Sustainability. (2024). Beat the heat. City of Albuquerque.
3. Associated Press. (2025, January 24). Extreme heat is killing homeless people and overwhelming health care systems. AP News. <https://apnews.com/article/extreme-heat-homeless-health-care-c57bbafdc936a36248be593df9036f13>
4. The White House. (2024). Draft community heat action checklist: A tool for local governments. The White House.
5. City of Albuquerque Sustainability. (2025). Heat resources. City of Albuquerque.
6. Snow, A. (2024). “Lifesaving IV hydration delivered to homeless people in sweltering Phoenix.” Arizona Daily Star.