

Preparing Schools for Extreme Heat Season



Young children and athletes are some of the most at-risk when it comes to the health effects of extreme heat.

The best way to prepare for extreme heat is to plan ahead. Use this guide to help safeguard students, staff, and your school community from heat-related illness. Currently, there is no statewide policy for handling extreme heat during school days, so it's up to each district and school to make their own plans.



1. Education (see pages 16-22 of toolkit)

- **Provide Information:** Teach students, teachers, and staff about the risks of extreme heat, including how to recognize the signs and symptoms of heat-related illnesses like heat stroke, heat exhaustion, and heat rash.



2. Assign Responsibilities (see pages 8-11 of toolkit)

- **Monitor Weather and Air Quality:** Assign staff to keep an eye on real-time weather and air quality alerts from local and state authorities.
- **Designate Heat Response Leads:** Assign heat response leads (e.g., school nurses) to monitor students for heat-related symptoms and decide when conditions warrant modifying activities.



3. Set Temperature Thresholds (see page 9 of toolkit)

- Establish clear guidelines for modifying, postponing, or canceling outdoor activities based on heat risk:
 - **Go Beyond Air Temperature:**
 - **Heat Index:** Consider both humidity and temperature to understand how hot it really feels. Use tools like the [Heat Index Chart](#) or [Heat Index Calculator](#).
 - **Wet Bulb Globe Temperature (WBGT):** Monitor heat stress using temperature, humidity, wind, and solar radiation. This metric is widely used in sports programs to guide safe activity levels.





4. Establish Communication Strategies

- Create a heat response plan and train all staff on recognizing heat illness symptoms and response protocols.
- **Use a multi-channel communication approach:**
 - Emails, newsletters, school websites, apps, flyers, morning announcements, classroom discussions, text messages, push notifications, and PA announcements.
- Discuss heat preparedness in school assemblies, staff meetings, and family communications in the weeks leading up to and during extreme heat events.
- Consider real-time alerts for sudden heat risks.



5. Promote Preventative Behaviors

Encourage students to:

- **Stay Hydrated:** Drink water or electrolyte-rich fluids regularly.
- **Stay Cool Indoors:** Spend time in air-conditioned spaces when possible.
- **Dress Smart:** Wear lightweight, light-colored and loose-fitting clothing and sunscreen (SPF 15 or higher). Reapply sunscreen every 2 hours when outdoors.
- **Plan Outdoor Activities:** Schedule them carefully, with frequent breaks in shaded areas.
- **Pace Activities:** Take it slow and rest often when outdoors.
- **Recognize Symptoms:** Educate on the warning signs of heat-related illnesses to act promptly.

By taking these steps, schools can proactively safeguard students and staff from the risks of extreme heat.



This document contains information extracted from our [Toolkit to Protect Students from Extreme Heat on School Campus](#)