



May 28, 2025

Dear community leader,

### Is your community ready for heat and wildfire smoke?

As summer approaches, Interior Health's Medical Health Officers are emphasizing preparedness. Temperatures in B.C. are increasing, and heat events are longer, hotter, and more frequent. Heat is a major weather-related cause of death in Canada and wildfire smoke has harmful health effects.

**Update for 2025:** [Interior Health has a new web page on Heat and Smoke Readiness for Community Leaders.](#) Visit for information on:

- Steps communities can take to prepare for heat and wildfire smoke
- Ways Interior Health can support your community and actions we are taking
- Funding opportunities for heat and smoke planning

### Actions community leaders can take:

1. **Make a plan:** Develop a preparedness and response plan for dealing with extreme heat and wildfire smoke. Resources are available on our [web page](#) to help you develop your plan.
2. **Share heat and smoke messages:** Distribute information from trusted sources about heat and air quality with your community. Visit our web pages for [heat](#) and [smoke](#) for information you can share.
3. **Sign up to receive notifications:** Stay up to date with notifications for heat warnings and air quality. You can subscribe to air quality warning notifications [here](#) and heat alerts through the [WeatherCAN App](#). [Sign up](#) to receive our alerts for health guidance during heat and air quality events.
4. **Consider ways to prepare for extreme heat:**
  - **Extend the operating hours of indoor cooling spaces.** Consider using a local school, meeting hall or other gathering place as a temporary cooling space.
  - **Extend the operating hours and expand access to outdoor amenities,** including drinking water stations, spray parks, and shaded outdoor areas.
  - **Consider overnight cooling centers.** These centres help support community members experiencing vulnerabilities as high overnight temperatures can be dangerous. You can add available shelters to the [Community Response Locations Portal](#).
  - **Encourage heat check-ins in neighbourhoods and communities,** especially for older adults and people who are more socially isolated.



5. **Consider ways to prepare for wildfire smoke:**

- **Support, establish, and promote cleaner air spaces.** Identify publicly accessible locations (e.g., libraries, shopping malls, and community centres) and publicize and share their locations/hours.
- **Support public spaces in improving air filtration.** Support public space operators with upgrading their HVAC systems for the summer. [MERV 13 or higher and HEPA filters](#) provide adequate protection from wildfire smoke.
- **Protect outdoor workers.** Encourage local employers to follow WorkSafe BC guidance on [heat](#) and [smoke](#)-related workplace safety.
- **Promote cleaner indoor air strategies for community members:**
  - **Utilize portable air cleaners and filters.** [Portable air cleaners](#) and filters can be claimed as a [medical expense](#) with a prescription by those with chronic respiratory or immune illnesses.
  - **Upgrade home air filtration.** Upgrade [HVAC or furnace filters](#) to MERV 13 or higher.
  - **Encourage DIY air cleaner initiatives.** Support your community to hold [BC Lung Do-it-Yourself \(DIY\) Air Cleaner Workshops](#) or to create [home-made box air filters](#).
  - **Promote well-fitted respirators.** Consider promoting [well fitted respirators \(e.g., N95, KN95\)](#) when clean air spaces are not available.

6. **Explore funding sources:** Visit our [web page](#) for regional, provincial and other funding opportunities to support community readiness.

**Learn about actions Interior Health is taking around heat and smoke readiness on our [web page](#).**

For questions related to heat and smoke response, please email [ihextremeweatherresponse@interiorhealth.ca](mailto:ihextremeweatherresponse@interiorhealth.ca).

To learn more about how inclusive, health-conscious community planning can support climate adaptation and resiliency planning, please email [healthycommunities@interiorhealth.ca](mailto:healthycommunities@interiorhealth.ca).

Sincerely,

Dr. Andy Delli Pizzi  
Medical Health Officer