



# *Extreme heat events: Media communication with impact*

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NCCEH webinar  
May 29, 2025 - 12 PM PT

# Land acknowledgement

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*I live, work, and play as a white settler and uninvited guest on the ancestral, unceded lands of the Coast Salish peoples, the x<sup>w</sup>məθk<sup>w</sup>əy̓əm (Musqueam), Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh (Squamish), and səlilwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations, who have stewarded these lands for countless generations, and continue to do so.*

# Outline



- About extreme heat event and media communication
- Findings from NCCEH study interviewing media professionals
- Dr. Anne-Marie Nicol
- Q&A



What kind of organization  
do you work/study at?

[https://app.sli.do/event/fLLTzhh  
Q2ADDtLYfNQf36X](https://app.sli.do/event/fLLTzhh<br/>Q2ADDtLYfNQf36X)

# CLIMATE CHANGE



- Climate change is **increasing frequency and severity** of extreme heat events

- Extreme heat is often under-recognized compared to other emergencies

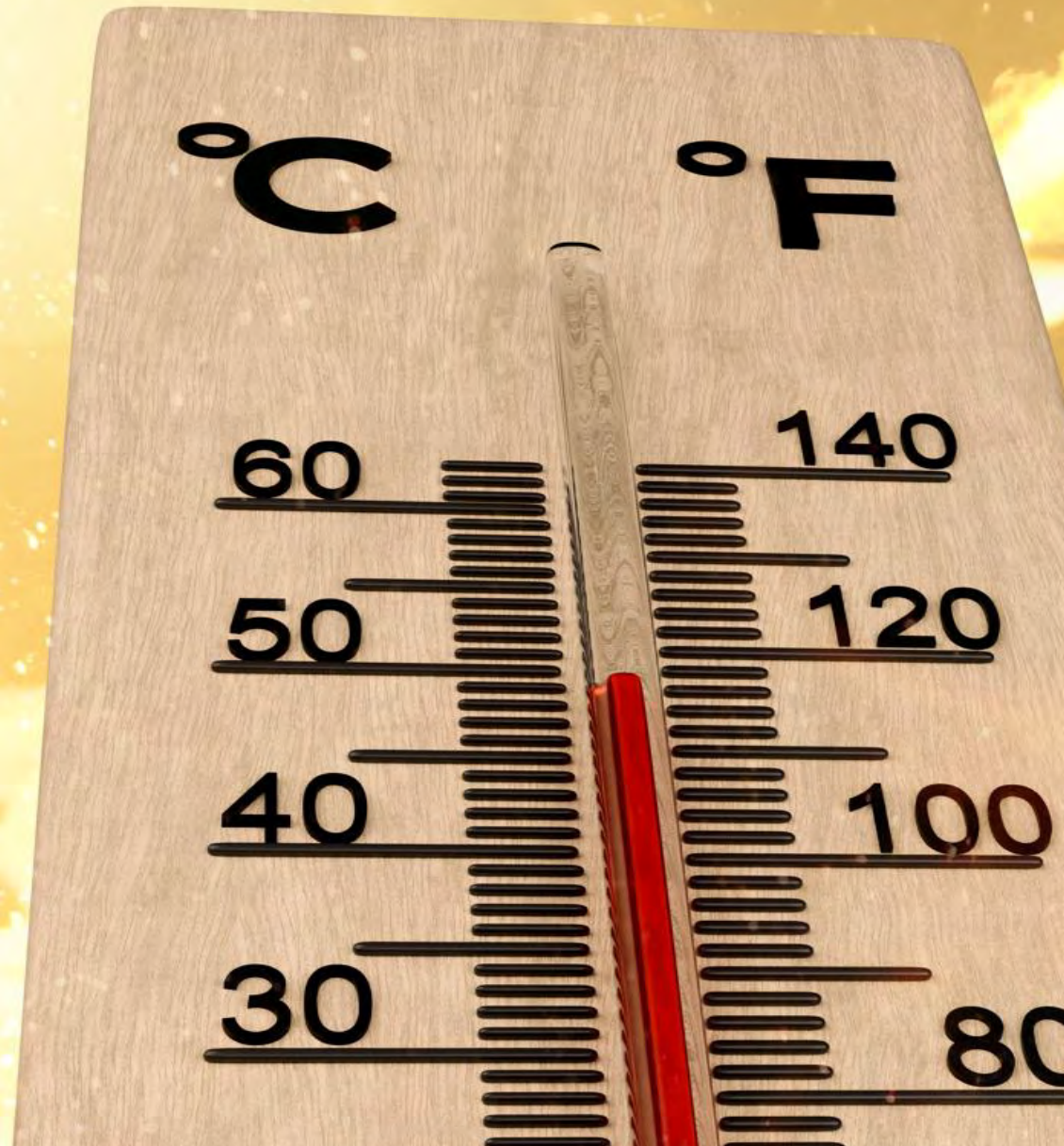
GREEN HOUSE EFFECT

HEAT DOME

HEAT WAVE

# What is an extreme heat event?

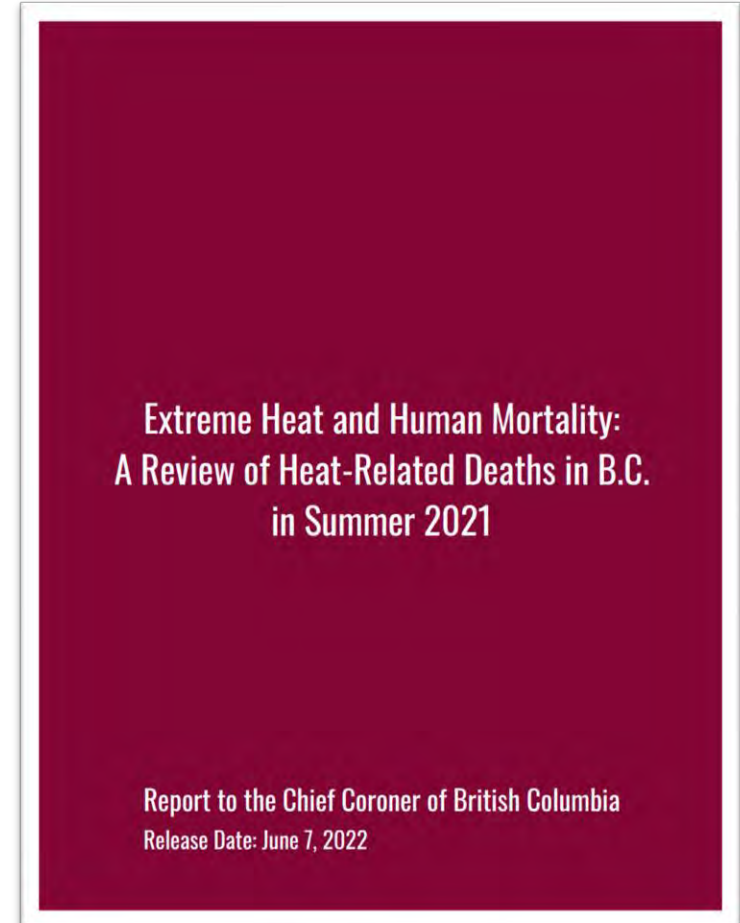
- Prolonged period with unusually high temperatures, well above seasonal norms
  - **Duration** – usually 2 or more consecutive days
  - Both **daytime highs and nighttime lows** exceed thresholds
  - High **humidity**, low wind speed, high radiant load, **urban heat island effect**
  - Local climate norms, season, and population adaptability/**acclimatization**



# Extreme heat is a public health priority

## 2021 Heat Dome

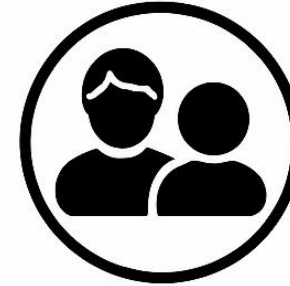
- 619 deaths in BC
- 98% deaths caused by indoor heat injury in a residence
- 67% were over 70 yrs
- >50% lived alone



# People with increased heat-health risk need to be prioritized



No access to safe temperatures in home



Older adults (60 years +)



Mental illness or cognitive impairment



Chronic diseases



Living alone / Socially isolated



Substance dependence / Substance use



Impaired / decreased mobility



Prescription medications



Poor physical fitness



What sources do you think your relatives and friends use for information on extreme heat/heat warnings?

<https://app.sli.do/event/fLLTzhhQ2ADDtLYfNQf36X>

# Media's role in extreme heat communication



- Media coverage shapes public perceptions of the risks
- Inform, educate, and motivate the public ***before, during, and after*** extreme heat events
- Journalists, broadcasters, photojournalists, editors, and producers, assignment editors etc. are all **key messengers**

# Media's role in extreme heat communication

- Public preparation is key
- Preparation can be improved through better public understanding of:
  - heat alerts/heat warnings
  - populations at risk
  - the signs and symptoms of heat-related illnesses
  - effective individual/community interventions
  - when to seek medical care


# Lacking the right messaging

## RESEARCH REPORTS

### Hot Topic: A Systematic Review and Content Analysis of Heat-Related Messages During the 2021 Heat Dome in Canada

 Tetzlaff, Emily J. MHK;  Goulet, Nicholas BSc;  Gorman, Melissa MPH; Richardson, Gregory R. A. MCIP, RPP; Enright, Paddy M. MSc;  Meade, Robert D. PhD, MPH;  Kenny, Glen P. PhD

[Author Information](#) 

*Journal of Public Health Management and Practice* 30(2):p 295-305, March/April 2024. | DOI: 10.1097/PHH.0000000000001817 

[OPEN](#)

[SDC](#)



# Inappropriate imagery is a constant issue...

- **European 2019 extreme heat events:**

Content/image analysis of 245 articles

The most common image was:

People having fun in or by water... thus framing heat events as “fun in the sun.”



The screenshot shows the header of a journal article. At the top left is the logo for 'THE GEOGRAPHICAL JOURNAL' with a large 'GJ' monogram. To the right of the logo is the text 'Royal Geographical Society with IAGU' and 'Advancing geographical knowledge'. Below the logo, the word 'ARTICLE' is followed by 'Open Access' with a lock icon, and 'CC BY' with the Creative Commons icons. The main title of the article is 'Visual portrayals of fun in the sun in European news outlets misrepresent heatwave risks'. Below the title, the authors are listed: 'Saffron O'Neill ✉, Sylvia Hayes, Nadine Strauß, Marie-Noëlle Doutreix, Katharine Steentjes, Joshua Ettinger, Ned Westwood, James Painter'. At the bottom, it says 'First published: 18 October 2022 | <https://doi.org/10.1111/geoj.12487> | Citations: 4'.



Europe heatwave: Where's the hot weather coming from and when will it end?



Wetenschap linkt extreem weer aan klimaatverandering

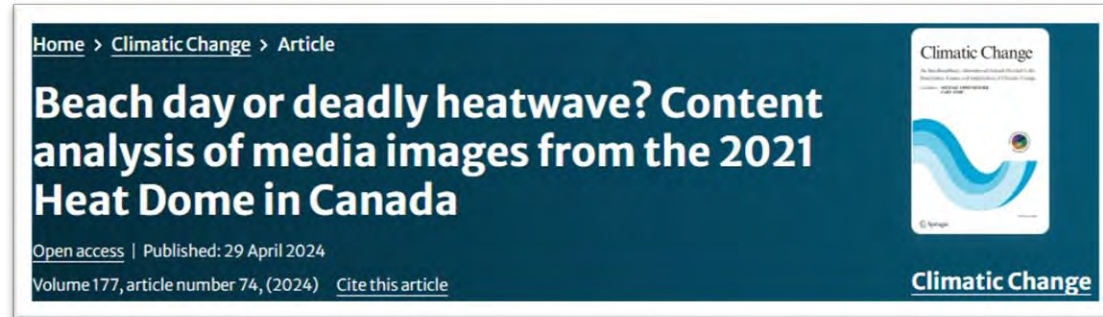


Kans op herhaling hittegolf van vorige week jaarlijks 1 tot 2 procent

Rode Kruis: Gemeenten moeten kwetsbare mensen voorbereiden op hitte



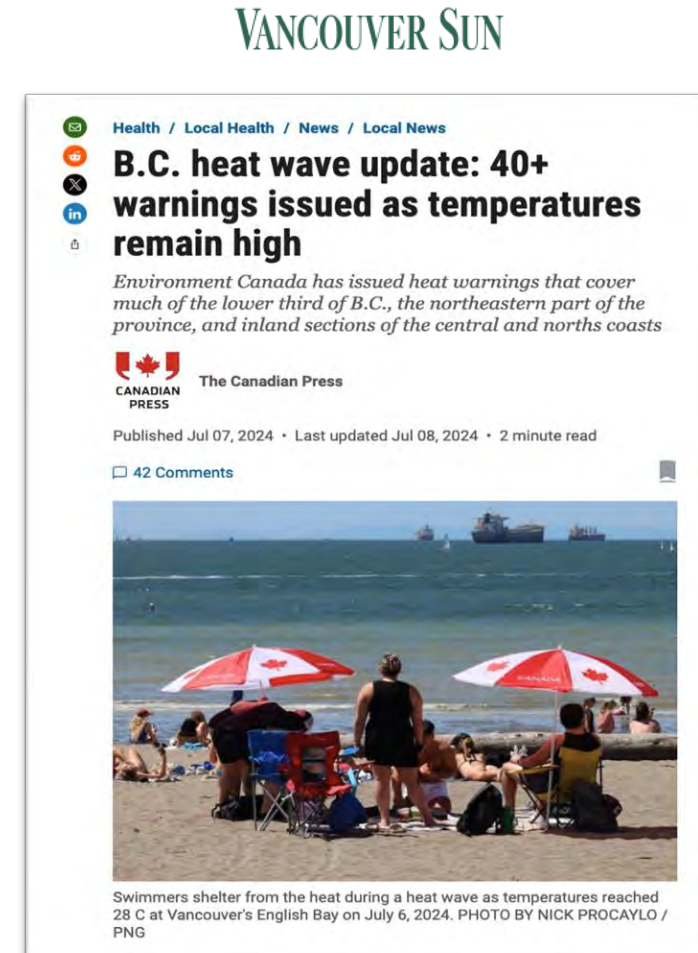
# Inappropriate imagery is a constant issue



- 2021 Heat dome in BC

Content/image analysis of 825 articles

- 16% of images implied heat was a danger
  - 46% of these depicted human suffering
- 4% of images contained actions to reduce risks of indoor heat



British Columbia

# Environment Canada warns of daylong hot spell in much of B.C.

Weather agency says much of the province could see temperatures between 5 C and 12 C above normal



Michelle Morton · CBC News · Posted: May 28, 2025 4:00 AM PDT | Last Updated: 6 hours ago



Environment Canada says it could be up to 12 C hotter than seasonal norms on Wednesday in much of B.C. (Ben Nelms/CBC)

It's going to be brief, but a hot one is on the cards for much of B.C. on Wednesday.

WEATHER

# Earth could see more years of extreme heat, top weather experts warn

By Seth Borenstein · The Associated Press

Posted May 28, 2025 5:46 am · Updated May 28, 2025 7:46 am · 3 min read



RELATED: What are 'wet-bulb temperatures' and why can they be so deadly? – Jun 5, 2024

# Guidance and recommendations



**Covering Climate Now** About Projects Partners Events Resources From Us

FROM US Editor's Notes June 18, 2024

## Reporting Guidance: 2024's Extreme Heat

Climate change is making extreme heat more frequent and more severe. Here are resources, sample copy, and tips to help you meet the moment.

BY CCNOW

### Storyline of a silent killer: Extreme heat and media communication

Rebecca Goulding

Climate Change > Extreme Weather > Public Health Fundamentals > Health Promotion And Protection

Tags: extreme heat | risk communication

Posted by NCCEH  
Jul 12, 2024

[View more Evidence Briefs and Research Scans >](#)

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  - Studies on media communication during extreme heat events
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#### Key messages

- Media professionals such as journalists, reporters, and editors can play pivotal roles in communicating about the risks of extreme heat events (EHEs).
- Key considerations for reporting on EHEs and their impacts include framing heat in the context of climate change, highlighting positive actions and solutions, acknowledging the inequitable impacts of heat on susceptible populations, and highlighting the indirect and potentially cascading impacts of heat.
- Practical recommendations include creating pre-season awareness, covering outdoor overnight and daytime heat, and focussing on the risks of heat in indoor settings.
- Media coverage should include images and text that convey heat health risks rather than recreational activities in the sun.
- Messages should focus on those who will be most affected by extreme heat, such as those without access to air conditioning, and positive actions people can take to protect themselves from extreme heat.
- Interview sources should provide a diversity of story context, local expert/researcher inputs, and a focus on early signs and symptoms of overheating rather than extreme cases of heatstroke.
- Media professionals and outlets should collaborate with public health and public safety to craft and distribute health-protective messages and general awareness about extreme heat prior to the heat season and in anticipation of EHEs.
- Additional consideration and direct collaboration will be needed during overlapping crises.

## Guidance Note for the Media

### Reporting on Heatwaves and the Health Impacts of Heat

July 2023

#### At a Glance

Media representations of heatwaves and climate change plays an important role in how the public thinks about, perceives, prepares for and acts on risks to their health, and how decision and policy makers address the problem.

This brief was developed by the Global Heat Health Information Network and partners to provide journalists, editors and others working in the media and communications sector with guidance and perspectives on how extreme heat and heat health narratives and imagery can help save lives and drive action.

#### Key Considerations

##### Frame heat in the context of climate change

Every heatwave and extreme heat event in the world is now made stronger and more likely because of human-induced global climate change. There is robust evidence that climate change is increasing the frequency, intensity, and duration of heatwaves worldwide, and these trends are projected to continue for the foreseeable future. Rising average temperatures also lead to increasing chronic heat risk.

It is crucial that journalists and media frame stories about the impacts of rising heat within the context of climate change, both to connect the dots for the audience and to raise awareness that can help drive rapid climate action - addressing both mitigation and management options.

July 2024

## Re.Climate

COMMUNICATING FOR CHANGE

### HEAT WAVES AND "UN-NATURAL DISASTERS"

A Tip Sheet for Communicators

This tip sheet provides guidelines for climate communicators to engage Canadians about the increasing frequency and intensity of extreme weather events—such as heat waves—due to climate change. This guide's framing, narrative, image, and strategic recommendations are based on peer-reviewed literature, Re.Climate's focus groups, and research by EcoAnalytics, Climate Visuals, and Potential Energy.

# GHHIN Key reporting considerations

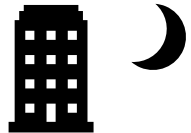
## Global Heat Health Information Network:

- Frame heat in the **context of climate change**
- Highlight **actions and solutions** such as accessing cooling spaces or low-cost cooling techniques
- Give attention to **inequitable impacts** of extreme heat on at-risk populations
- Portray the **indirect impacts** of extreme heat events

# GHHIN Practical recommendations



**Timing:** Pre-season awareness coverage



**Coverage:** Add a focus on nighttime temperatures and indoor settings



**Imagery:** Use more realistic imagery of the dangerous impacts of extreme heat and use positive action imagery



**Focus:** Balance focus between acute EHEs and chronic impacts of heat exposure



**Interviews:** Range of contextual interviews for story perspectives and focus on local experts and researchers

# *What do media professionals in Canada think?*

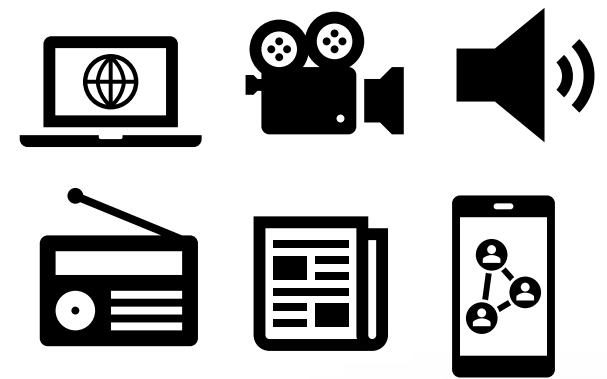
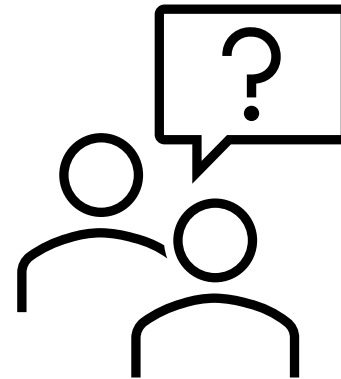


# Project purpose



Objectives:

- Improve understanding of *how the media communicates* about extreme heat events
- Identify key *challenges or gaps* related to extreme heat reporting
- Highlight *solutions* to address these challenges



# Project methods

- 12 expert interviews – semi structured
- Responses were analyzed in aggregate and reported anonymously
- Common themes across interviewees were identified, noting the frequency and additional relevant context

# Approaches media use for reporting on extreme heat



Write local, human-focused stories about people at risk with practical tips and positive solutions (7/12)



Pitching and assigning follows similar rules as other news with focus on timeliness, proximity, and relevance (5/12)

# Approaches media use for reporting on extreme heat



Attend pre-heat season briefings (6/12)



Use experts from health authorities, hospitals, and universities — prioritizing local experts if possible (5/12)



Use impactful and authentic in-house visuals (4/12)

# Audience disengagement and normalization of heat

- **Doom-focused climate narratives** can cause disengagement (4/12)
- Constant need for the “**new and now**” story with relevant angles (3/12)
- **Middle-class perspectives** – portray extreme heat positively, while underrepresenting at-risk populations (2/12)
- **Level of audience interest is low** – further desensitization possible as heat risks are **normalized** (2/12)



*...“the adage is: “If it bleeds, it leads”, so there’s this old reflex that if you put something dramatic or conflict-oriented in the headline, people are going to click on it.*

*But we’re finding that this is turning people off.”*

*“...there's that law of diminishing returns,  
where it [extreme heat] just becomes  
normalized.”*

# Barriers to timely, inclusive and accurate information



- The **Meta news ban** has disrupted news dissemination – particularly for real-time updates (6/12)



- **Limited resources, rigid approval processes** within public health (4/12)



- **Diverse audiences not being reached** – lack of multilingual support, delayed translations, and local representation (3/12)



- **Misinformation, AI-generated content, algorithm-driven media, and disinformation** challenge reporting and reach (3/12)

# Gaps in expert access, data, and visuals



The jargon word for “jargon” is “terminology”

- Lack of timely access to experts or collaboration (5/12)

- Problematic use of jargon by experts (2/12)

- Need for improved access to user-friendly, reliable health data and information (4/12)

- Visual storytelling of extreme heat is challenging – tight budgets and fast-paced reporting (5/12)





***“We like to have good statistics, and we like to have the references for them too. So, one thing that always comes up is, for example, heat deaths. And heat deaths are measured differently everywhere [...] As in what is considered a heat death?”***

***“A challenge in reporting on extreme heat and anything climate related, really, is the interviews, and actually getting the experts to speak in a way that is accessible.”***

# General time, staffing, and resource constraints



- **Current media landscape:** time, staffing, and resource constraints (5/12)



- **Climate links often missed** in fast-paced news cycles (2/12)




- **Low audience interest** for early, pre-season heat coverage (2/12)

# Human-centred and inclusive storytelling

- Avoid the “doom and gloom” narrative → need **solution-oriented journalism** putting people in the centre (3/12)
- Focus on those at higher risk, the urgency of heat risks, and peer-networks (2/12), **telling local level stories** (2/12)
- Engage **diverse, multilingual, and relevant audiences** including Indigenous experts and those with lived and living experience (2/12)
- Experts should **avoid the use of jargon** (2/12)



*LOCAL*



*“Most of the emergency warnings provided by government officials are/were in English or French. One of the solutions for quicker and more effective outreach to ethnic communities is to provide material translated in more third languages.”*

*“...I just want to emphasize regarding resources that the peers themselves [...] are such a great resource with lived experience and connections. ...it would be key to engage those people.”*

*“And it comes back to regional storytelling – it works in community because there’s more credibility and trust. I would say similarly, you know, having the right experts from Indigenous communities to be able to speak to this in a good way.”*

# Access to data, info, and resources



- Create an **updated directory** of diverse, local experts, visuals, stories and pre-emptive support from communication teams (7/12)



- Provision of reliable, **real-time data** and simplified, easily **searchable guides** on heat-related information (6/12)



- Information from public health should be shared in **press releases and published on social media** (4/12)

*“Many journalists have to produce multiple stories in a single day, so if there’s an upcoming extreme heat event, they need quick, reliable information they can easily draw from.”*

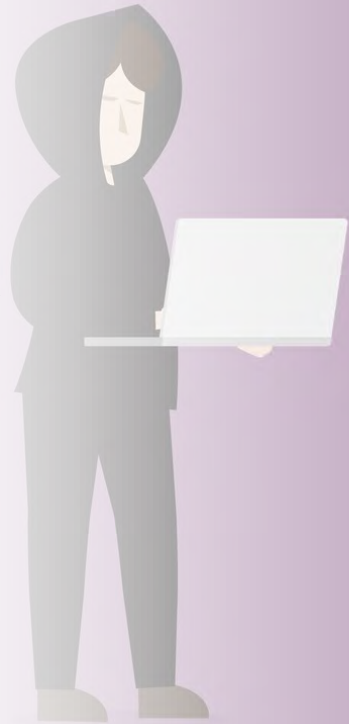


# Support climate literacy & counter misinformation

- Reliable **climate science resources**, workshops and webinars, **myth-busting information** (5/12)

- Counter misinformation with **ethical standards**, better correction mechanisms → promotion of **transparency, trust in science, and media literacy** (2/12)

*“And so, there’s a piece here too, for communication professionals to sign codes of ethics to understand the consequence of not acting in a good way.”*



# In the right direction...

## Cities across Canada consider maximum temperature policy for rental units

By Cloe Logan | News, Climate Solutions Reporting | June 20th 2024



#CBCNEWS



### No escape from the heat

High indoor temperatures are dangerous, especially when there's no relief at night. In a 5-city national project, CBC News uncovered how Canadians are suffering in their own homes — sometimes with fatal consequences.

Global News Hour at 6 Edmonton  
Extreme heat warning in Alberta prompts warning about indoor temperatures

Courtesy: Elen Campbell



Global NEWS

00:01 / 01:38

### Extreme heat warning in Alberta prompts warning about indoor temperatures

AUGUST 18, 2022

# Key takeaways

- Media professionals strive to write local, human and solution-focused stories, based on accurate data and expert input, with appropriate visuals
- They face challenges in covering extreme heat:
  - limited resources and data, expert and imagery access
  - engagement fatigue
  - barriers to reaching diverse communities—especially with the added impact of the Meta news ban
- They recommend building:
  - local expert networks
  - improving access to reliable data and visuals
  - telling inclusive, community-centered stories
- *Strong collaboration* between media and public health can boost trust, counter misinformation, improve climate literacy, and support those most at risk



What might be a barrier for collaboration between public health and media professionals regarding extreme heat communication?

[https://app.sli.do/event/fLLTzhhQ2  
ADDtLYfNQf36X](https://app.sli.do/event/fLLTzhhQ2ADDtLYfNQf36X)

Add to the chat!

What might be enablers for collaboration between public health and media professionals regarding extreme heat communication?

# There's more in the report...



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for Environmental Health  
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en santé environnementale



Français <sup>en</sup>

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## Extreme heat events: Media communication with impact

Rebecca Goulding May 8, 2025

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Tags: [extreme heat](#) | [heat interventions](#) | [risk communication](#)

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Current approaches for reporting and producing stories on extreme heat



[Extreme heat events: Media communication with impact | National Collaborating Centre for Environmental Health | NCCEH - CCSNE](#)



# Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all the participants for their time and thoughtful contributions during the interviews, which informed this study.

We would also like to thank the members of our advisory panel, who helped develop the methodology for this study and identify media professionals and public health communicators to interview.

We acknowledge the funding and support provided by Health Canada to conduct this study. The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the views of Health Canada.

Thanks to Elizabeth Loftus and Barb Karlen (NCCEH), Joshua Grant (Communications Specialist, BCCDC; former journalist), Dr. Anne-Marie Nicol (Associate Professor, Simon Fraser University Health Sciences), Dr. Juliette O'Keefe, and Dr. Sarah Henderson (NCCEH).



# Health checks during extreme heat events

A guide for doing in-person or remote health checks

1

Extreme heat events can lead to dangerous indoor temperatures in homes without functioning air conditioning. Health checks are used to assess how people at high risk of heat-related illness are doing during extreme events. In-person health checks are best, but a remote health check is better than no health check.



## Rapid risk assessment checklist

This guide has five pages with important information for doing health checks during extreme heat events.

**PAGE 1**  
Rapid risk assessment checklist

**PAGE 2**  
Recognizing and responding to heat-related illness

**PAGE 3**  
In-person health checks

**PAGE 4**  
Remote health checks

**PAGE 5**  
Measuring body and room temperature

To assess whether someone is at risk, check all the personal factors that apply on the following list. **The more boxes checked, the higher the potential risk.**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Older adult (60 years+)</b>                | The body's ability to cool itself is impaired as people age.   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Mental illness or cognitive impairment</b> | Conditions such as schizophrenia, depression, anxiety, and dementia can reduce awareness of heat-related risks.                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Chronic disease</b>                        | Chronic diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, respiratory disease, and cancer can limit the body's ability to cool.                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Living alone or socially isolated</b>      | People who live alone or do not have strong social connections are at higher risk because they have fewer people looking out for them. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Substance dependency or use</b>            | The ability to sense and respond to heat can be affected by use of drugs or alcohol, especially for those who are dependent.           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Impaired or decreased mobility</b>         | People with impaired or reduced mobility might be less able to take protective measures during extreme heat events.                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Medication use</b>                         | Some prescription medications for common conditions can cause dehydration and affect the body's ability to cool itself.                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Poor physical fitness</b>                  | People who are not engaged in regular physical activity are less able to keep cool in the heat.  |

June 2022



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thank you!

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We would like to acknowledge the generous funding and support from **Health Canada**. Without this contribution, this work would not have been possible. The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the views of **Health Canada**.

Production of this document has been made possible through a financial contribution from the **Public Health Agency of Canada**.



# Resources in this presentation

- [BC Coroner's Service; Extreme Heat Death Review Panel Report, June 2022](#)
- [GHHIN; Reporting on heat waves and the health impacts of heat](#)
- [CCN; Reporting guidance: 2024's extreme heat](#)
- [NCCEH; Storyline of a silent killer: Extreme heat and media communication, July 2024](#)
- [NCCEH; Extreme heat events: Communication with impact, May 2025](#)
- [FNHA; Be prepared for hot weather](#)
- [Prepared BC; Extreme heat guide – Simplified Chinese, May 2023](#)
- [Prepared BC; Extreme heat guide - English, May 2023](#)

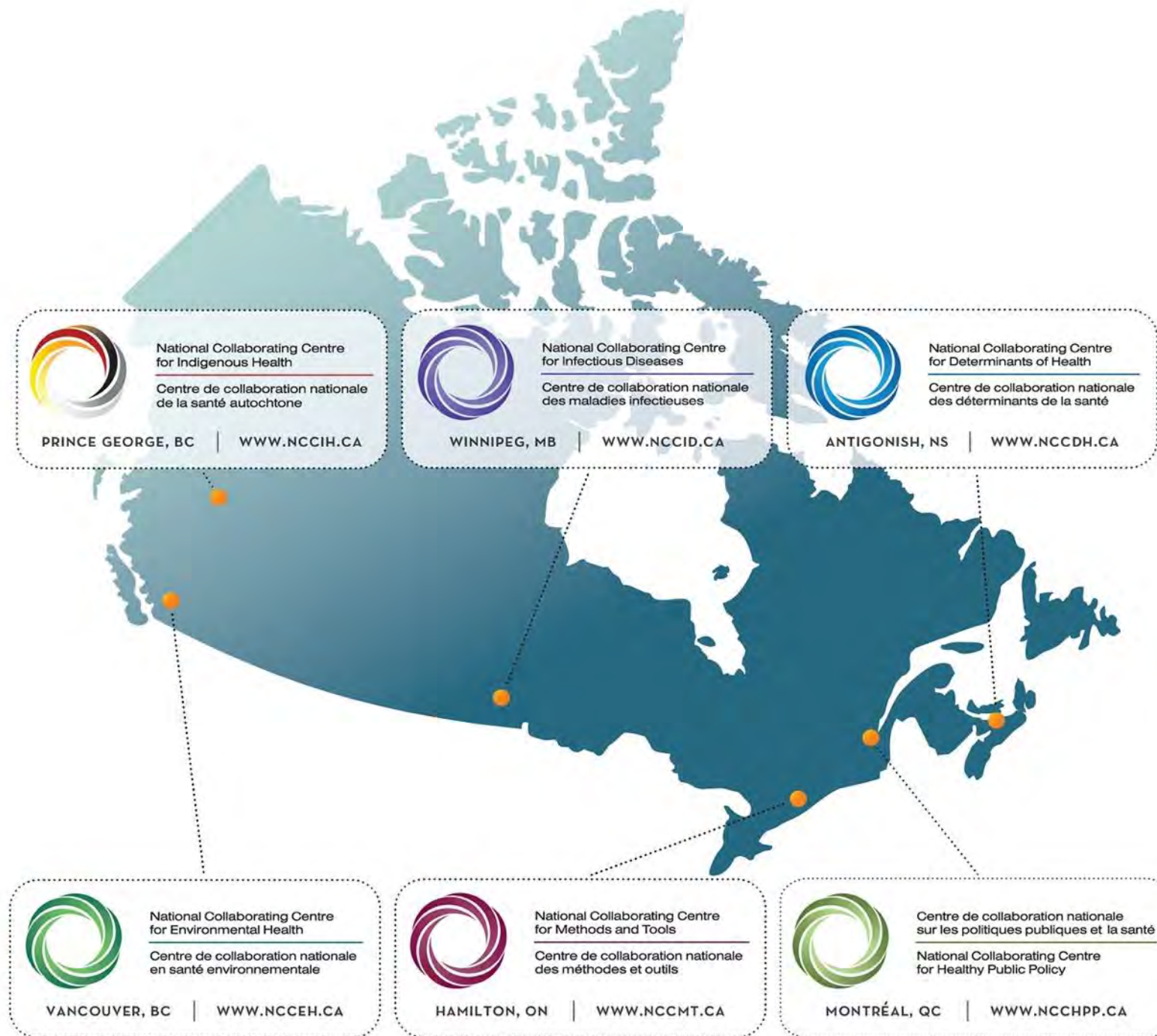
# Resources in this presentation

- Tetzlaff EJ, Goulet N, Gorman M, Richardson GR, Enright PM, Meade RD, et al. Hot topic: A systematic review and content analysis of heat-related messages during the 2021 Heat Dome in Canada. *J Public Health Manag Pract.* 2024;30(2):295-305. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1097/PHH.0000000000001817>.
- O'Neill S, Hayes S, Strauß N, Doutreix M-N, Steentjes K, Ettinger J, et al. Visual portrayals of fun in the sun in European news outlets misrepresent heatwave risks. *Geogr J.* 2023;189(1):90-103. Available from: <https://rgs-ibg.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/geoj.12487>.
- Tetzlaff EJ, Goulet N, Yapici N, Gorman M, Richardson GRA, Enright PM, et al. Beach day or deadly heatwave? Content analysis of media images from the 2021 heat dome in Canada. *Clim Change.* 2024;177(5):74. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10584-024-03713-6>.

Evidence-based knowledge synthesis and translation

Identify knowledge gaps

Foster networks, build capacity for Canada's public health system



# Imagery frames the context of the article

<https://cheknews.ca/warmest-on-record-bc-heatwave-keeps-trend-of-hottest-year-ever-on-earth-1208851/>

[Earth could see more years of extreme heat, top weather experts warn - National | Globalnews.ca](#)



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NEWS

## 'Warmest on record': B.C. heatwave keeps trend of hottest year ever in earth's recorded history

by Skye Ryan September 6, 2024 5:59 pm



People swim in the Englishman River near Parksville.

B.C.'s current 'Summer in September' heatwave is smashing temperature records, capping off the [hottest year globally on record](#).