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Heat & Smoke Activation Thresholds

While known for moderate, wet weather, King County also experiences periods of dangerously high heat that can cause significant negative health consequences, including death. Public Health – Seattle & King County recommends the activation of overnight and daytime cooling centers when the National Weather Service issues a Heat Advisory. In accordance with our other governmental partners such as Public Health, KCRHA follows the HeatRisk (outlined in the chart below). The categories are not only based on afternoon heat, but also on the effects of overnight temperature in terms of how it either mitigates or augments the effects of daytime heat.

Heat Risk Categories

Category	Level	Meaning
Green	0	No elevated risk
Yellow	1	Low Risk for those extremely sensitive to heat, especially those without effective cooling and/or adequate hydration
Orange	2	Moderate Risk for those who are sensitive to heat, especially those without effective cooling and/or adequate hydration
Red	3	High Risk for much of the population, especially those who are heat sensitive and those without effective cooling and/or adequate hydration
Magenta	4	Very High Risk for entire population due to long duration of heat, with little to no relief overnight

Activation Tiers

TIER 1 – Outreach and Preparation	
National Weather Service HeatRisk indicates “ YELLOW ” in a sub-region within King County	
Activation	
Dissemination of key public health safety messaging and risk communications to at-risk populations.	Outreach to service providers to evaluate supply needs to support warehouse preparations for potential entrance into tier 2 or tier 3.
TIER 2 – Targeting Resourcing	
National Weather Service HeatRisk indicates “ ORANGE ” in a sub-region within King County	
Activation	
<i>Tier 1 Activation Plus:</i>	
<p>If ORANGE forecast for only 24 hours for a locality:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partner and support water distribution and other cooling supplies for at-risk communities and populations 	<p>If ORANGE forecast lasts more than 24 hours:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partner with jurisdictions to selectively activate daytime cooling centers for unsheltered individuals in heat islands/high usage areas • Contact providers to test their HVAC and ice making systems • Update communications materials including but not limited to KCRHA’s Severe Weather webpage and flyers • Scale up other activities required to meet recommendations of Tier 3
TIER 3 – Daytime Cooling	
HeatRisk indicates to “ RED ” and/or “ MAGENTA ” in a sub-region within King County	
Activation	
<i>Tier 1 and 2 Activation Plus:</i>	
<p>For forecast RED/MAGENTA lasting only 24 hours:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targeted outreach efforts to reach at-risk populations using 1.6 mile grid resolution with cooling center communications, cooling supplies and water distribution 	<p>For forecast RED/MAGENTA lasting more than 24 hours:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targeted HeatRisk zone activation of daytime cooling centers for unsheltered individuals • Stand up cooling tents with misting fans in high unsheltered population corridors, provide hydration supplies • Outreach: Conduct wellness checks on elders and people living with disabilities to ensure access to air conditioning or cooling centers; • Coordinate transit access to take people to cooling sites • Partner with jurisdictions to explore expanding hours of operation for cooling centers for unsheltered individuals to accommodate overnight use



Poor Air Quality & Wildfire Smoke Activation

Increased wildfires in the Pacific Northwest have caused periods of unhealthy air quality. Exposure to these conditions can cause immediate and long-term negative health consequences. Due to the continued exposure that our unsheltered population face during incidents of poor air quality and this population often has co-occurring conditions, the **KCRHA will begin activation of cleaner air sites when the Air Quality Index (AQI) is Orange - Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups (Index Value of 101–150)**. Activation at this level is coordinated mask distribution with Public Health – Seattle & King County and coordination with outreach providers.

Further activation will occur when AQI escalates to Red - Unhealthy for All Groups. At this level, KCRHA will work with contracted providers to activate smoke shelters. KCRHA will also follow the wildfire smoke guidelines set in place by PHSKC. Given that unhealthy air quality does not have traditional spikes or trends across the day such as with heat, this type of activation requires 24/7 options for people living unsheltered. Cleaner air sites activated by KCRHA will follow guidelines set by PHSKC. KCRHA will work with community groups to connect vulnerable unsheltered populations to cleaner air sites open to the public.

Additionally, KCRHA retains the right to activate for unusual severe weather events or natural disasters with approval from the Executive Leadership Team.

