

**Office of Emergency Services
County of Tuolumne**

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**Public Health Department
County of Tuolumne**

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June 28, 2021

TO: Tuolumne County Board of Supervisors

FROM: Dore Bietz - OES Coordinator
Dr. Eric Sergienko, Interim Public Health Officer
Michelle Jachetta, Public Health Director

SUBJECT: Discussion and Board direction on the Extreme Temperature Contingency Plan

Background

In 2011 the Tuolumne County Board of Supervisors adopted an Extreme Temperature Contingency Plan to address planning, response, and recovery related to extreme heat or cold events in the County. The document provides guidance not only for County governmental agencies, but for community and faith-based organizations, businesses, and community coalitions to provide a response to extreme temperature emergencies in an effort to protect the health and safety of our citizens. Particularly at risk for extreme temperature events are the elderly, young children, the medically fragile, those without sufficient heating and cooling systems, or without adequate shelter.

Then in 2019, the Board of Supervisors approved an update to the Extreme Temperature Contingency Plan that added functional tools and guidance for the activation of warming or cooling centers and shelters. Providing this information allows agencies involved to be timely, effective, and efficient in their response. The criteria for activating the three phases of the plan have not changed with the update in 2019, and included consideration of the following:

- Weather and temperature criteria based on National Weather Service guidelines
- Power outage experiences and forecasts
- Abnormal human and/or animal morbidity and mortality
- Neighboring jurisdiction activations

The Extreme Temperature Contingency Plan is an annex to the County's Emergency Operations Plan, and is included as an annex to the Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Plan (HEPRP); a comprehensive plan developed in the early 2000's, and regularly maintained by the Public Health Department's emergency preparedness grant staff, to establish and build upon the capability of our healthcare system and whole community to prepare for, respond to, and recover from incidents which may impact the health of Tuolumne County's residents and visitors.

Current Situation

The 2019 Extreme Temperature Contingency Plan (attached), recognizes 3 phases of activation for extreme temperature-related emergencies. Throughout all three phases, coordination and communication among local partners (both operational and those who serve our most vulnerable residents), the State, and the public is primary. Phase Three of the plan is when Tuolumne County may activate cooling centers when there is a Heat Warning (emergency) and weather conditions with a heat index of 105° or more during the day combined with night temperatures of 75° or higher for period of three days/nights or more. When these temperature thresholds are not met, Tuolumne County still provides for assistance by:

- Coordinating with the local Department of Social Services and other agencies who serve our most vulnerable residents to increase messaging and contact with those who may be at highest risk.
- Working with departments and facilities that can stay opened and staffed longer
- Outreach out to partner agencies such as Red Cross about resource availability.
- Contact our local CERT programs for staffing of any potential cooling stations/centers.
- Issuing a press release to inform the public.
- Coordinate surveillance of heat-related illness or injury with healthcare and emergency services agencies.
- Issuing a series of Heat Safety messages on our social media outlets.
- Coordination with Adventist Health Sonora and Emergency Medical Service providers to identify any increase in heat injury cases.

When the plan calls for opening a center, two of the primary issues surrounding activation of cooling or warming centers or shelters are staffing, and facilities that can or are available to open. Currently, there are no dedicated staff for cooling or warming centers or shelters and in the past, County staff have been pulled from their current jobs or asked to work extra hours as needed. Unfortunately, centers/shelters go unused and county resources have been deployed for an anticipated need that does not come to fruition. OES and Public Health have been developing the county's Disaster Service Worker (DSW) and volunteer base prior to, and during the COVID emergency response. OES staff are working on how we can improve partnerships and work with our DSW's should we get to the point of opening facilities and creating a roster of DSW volunteers who could staff any facility if we meet the threshold as outlined in the plan. Adjusting the plan's threshold will increase the frequency of staff deployment and require dedicated funding of approximately \$50,000 to cover the cost of staff, oversight staff, utilities, water, snacks, and sanitation services to name a few.

Lastly, increasing the plan's threshold will rely heavily on the public to support our efforts by signing up to be a Volunteer. Volunteering will allow us to staff centers when needed or when paid staff are not available. If anyone from the public is interested in volunteering with Tuolumne County, please visit our website at <https://www.tuolumnecounty.ca.gov/1324/So-you-want-to-Volunteer>

Recommendation

It is the recommendation of the Office of Emergency Services, Public Health Department, and the Interim Public Health Officer Dr. Sergienko that we continue to follow the 2019 Extreme Temperature Contingency Plan as written. Staff will continue to work with local partners prior to a possible extreme temperature event to extend hours or open facilities that would be available to those in need. Staff will also continue to coordinate with our Public Health partners to monitor any potential health impacts.