



Community Cooling Center Guidance

June 2023

This resource provides guidance for communities to operate cooling centers and take other actions to help prevent health impacts caused by hot weather.



What is a community cooling center?

In Maine, heat-related illnesses occur more frequently when temperatures reach the mid-to-upper 80s and hotter. Community cooling centers help provide temporary relief and are especially helpful when the National Weather Service issues a Heat Advisory or Excessive Heat Warning.

Cooling centers can be established in any air-conditioned building that can be opened to the public, such as a library, town hall, or senior center. Private buildings including movie theaters and retail facilities can also be used as cooling centers. Charging Stations for electronic devices such as Cell Phones, Laptops, and Tablets are encouraged. The following are common characteristics for community cooling centers:

Recommended	Encouraged
Air-conditioned	Back-up generator available
Accessible to the public	Activities available for guests
American Disabilities Act compliant	Separate room for families and children
Access to restrooms	Public transit / other transportation assistance available
Access to water	Provisions for pets
Seating available for all guests	Extended hours as needed
Widely advertised throughout community	On-site health and social services

If you plan to open a cooling center in your community, please coordinate with your Local and County Emergency Management Director for further guidance.

Please notify your County Emergency Management Agency when a Cooling Center is opened. The County Emergency Management Agency will notify the Maine Emergency Management Agency who will then notify the MEMA Duty Officer, I/A Officer, Mass Care Coordinator, PIO, and 211 Maine.

The County Emergency Management Agency will use the following email to for notifications of Cooling Center Openings at the following:

CenterShelter.OpenNotification@maine.gov



What else can be done to prevent heat illnesses?

Follow this link to the Maine CDC for additional information: [Preparing for Very Hot Weather - Environmental & Occupational Health - Maine CDC: DHHS Maine.](#)

Communities can take additional steps, including:

- Communicate heat safety tips to community residents, including guidance for staying safe in homes without air conditioning.
- Mobilize local care networks to check on people at high risk for heat illness.
- Encourage use of public parks, pools, water bodies, or other outdoor assets that can provide relief during hot weather. Consider reducing or removing entry fees for anyone that needs assistance.
- Set up shade structures, hose/misting stations, and provide bottled water in parts of the community without convenient access to cooling resources.
- For outdoor work, recreational activities, or other local events, ensure that organizers are prepared with water, cooling strategies, and event modification or cancellation plans.

Long-term, communities can support the following strategies:

- Adopt hot weather emergency preparedness and response plans.
- Increase trees, shrubs, and other vegetative cover while reducing paved surfaces to keep urbanized areas cooler.
- Promote energy-efficient building retrofits and design, including weatherization, installation of efficient cooling devices like heat pumps, and use of cool roof and paving materials.

Questions?

Contact the Maine Emergency Management Agency Mass Care Coordinator at william.guindon@maine.gov or 207-458-2867 with questions about cooling centers or other heat illness prevention strategies.