

Heatwaves and Wildfires Preparedness, Readiness and Response in the Health Sector

Resources and Guidance Package for Member States

According to WHO European Region data, in 35 countries in the Region, more than 61,000 people died in 2022 and 47,000 in 2023 due to heat. In a modelling study published in [Nature Medicine](#), which covered 854 European cities, the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM) suggests that climate change will likely result in a significant rise in deaths from heat across Europe, substantially surpassing any decrease in cold-related deaths.

In a recent statement issued on [LinkedIn](#), Dr Hans Henri P. Kluge, WHO Regional Director for Europe, warned that the scorching heat that is sweeping across the WHO European Region right now is putting countless lives at risk, while straining our health systems. Heat, he said: “threatens the people who need protection most: older adults, children, outdoor workers, and anyone living with chronic health conditions.”

In light of the risks to health caused by the current heatwaves and wildfires affecting our Region, the WHO Regional Office for Europe has prepared a resource package outlined below to support Member States preparedness, readiness and response efforts in the health sector.

1. Public Health Advice



Updated public health advice is available on heat, wildfires and on mass gathering events this summer.

Heat - #KeepCool campaign:

- 2025 #KeepCool information sheet (in 6 languages): <https://www.who.int/europe/publications/m/item/health-advice-for-hot-weather>
- 2023 #KeepCool information sheet (in 20+ languages): <https://who.canto.global/v/V6BJQPBKL4/album/PQCBG>
- #KeepCool short videos (in 5 languages): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q2N4vVf5DFE&list=PLL4_zLP7J_mjqWnqviUSnQ13NcSuSDgU3
- Social media tiles (in multiple languages): <https://who.canto.global/v/coronavirus/library?keyword=Keepcool&viewIndex=1>

For further information please contact us at euroclimate@who.int

Heat – health advice incorporated into public health advice for mass gathering events:

Catholic Jubilee Year of Hope (ongoing until 6 Jan 2026)

- Public Health Advice (PHA) on WHO/Europe's website [here](#)
- An accompanying news story: [Public health advice for visitors attending the Jubilee 2025 in Italy](#)
- The Jubilee social media package can be accessed [here](#), with suggested posts.
- Editable social media tiles can be found [here](#).

Wildfires:

- Q&A [here](#), RUS [here](#)
- Editable (ENG) social media assets [here](#)
- Editable (ENG) brochure template [here](#)

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WHO website content on heat and health:

- A new dedicated public health section on WHO/Europe's website and specific heat-related advice [here](#) and on wildfires [here](#), with public health advice [here](#)
- Regional Director statement: [The climate crisis is a health crisis – and the European Region is in the hot seat](#)
- Global Heat Health Information Network (GHHIN): Action Plans. <https://ghhin.org/resource-library/>

2. WHO Technical guidance and tools

Health-Health Action Planning and evidence on public health impact.

Health-Health Action plans guidance:

- Preventing the health impacts of extreme heat requires a coordinated set of actions across multiple sectors. These include early warning systems, timely public and medical advice, improvements in housing and urban design, and ensuring that health and social care systems are prepared to respond. Such measures can be brought together in a structured Heat-Health Action Plan. This guidance outlines the importance of developing these plans, describes their key features and core elements, and provides examples from European countries that have already begun implementing and evaluating them. <https://www.who.int/europe/publications/i/item/9789289071918>

Heat and Health in the WHO European Region: updated evidence for effective prevention (2021).

- This publication brings together the latest research on how heat affects our health, drawing from both scientific studies and real-world experiences. It focuses on countries in the WHO European Region and builds on the 2008 heat-health action plan guidance on how to prepare for and respond to extreme heat. While there are still some gaps in what we know, the evidence shared in this document clearly shows that more countries need to develop and expand their heat-health action plans. <https://www.who.int/europe/publications/i/item/9789289055406>

Public health advice on preventing health effects of heat: new and updated information for different audiences (2011).

- This publication offers detailed information for various target audiences, and on medical advice and treatment practices. <https://www.who.int/europe/publications/i/item/WHO-EURO-2011-2510-42266-58691>

Improving public health responses to extreme weather/heatwaves: Summary for policymakers (2009).

- <https://iris.who.int/bitstream/handle/10665/107934/WHO-EURO-2009-8607-48379-71825-eng.pdf?sequence=3>

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2. WHO Technical guidance and tools

Health System and Facility Preparedness

Health system readiness checklist for heatwaves

- It provides a clear, step-by-step guide to ensure all critical areas of a health system - coordination → risk detection → public health response → resilience and adaptation - are addressed before a heatwave occurs. Available upon request.

Hospital safety index: guide for evaluators, 2nd ed. + hospital safety index evaluation forms (2015).

- An all-hazards tool which is used to assess the overall safety and emergency preparedness of a hospital. [Hospital safety index: guide for evaluators](#)

Hospital Emergency Response Planning (H-ERP) Guidance

- This guide has been developed by the WHO Regional Office for Europe to assist Member States and hospitals to develop, update, or adapt their hospital emergency response plans (H-ERPs). Available upon request.

WHO guidance for climate resilient and environmentally sustainable health facilities (2020).

- The aim of this guidance is to enhance the capacity of health care facilities to protect and improve the health of their target communities in an unstable and changing climate [WHO guidance for climate resilient and environmentally sustainable health care facilities](#)

Checklists to assess vulnerabilities in health-care facilities in the context of climate change (2011).

- Designed as a complementary tool to the WHO Guidance for climate-resilient and environmentally sustainable health-care facilities, the primary purpose of this checklist document is to support users in establishing a baseline with regards to climate change resilience in health-care facilities. [Checklists to assess vulnerabilities in health care facilities in the context of climate change](#)

Building climate resilient WASH services in health-care facilities (2024).

- <https://iris.who.int/handle/10665/376126>

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Response

Guidance and support for operational response to heatwaves and wildfires.

- **Standards and recommendations for burns care in mass casualty incidents** [Standards and recommendations for burns care in mass casualty incidents](#)
- **Mental Health and Psychological Support during health emergencies and disasters** [MHPSS Interventions](#)
- **Emergency Medical Teams** [EMT blue book](#)
- **WHO Emergency Response Framework**, [Emergency response framework \(ERF\), Edition 2.1](#)

For further information please contact us at euroeoc@who.int

3. Useful media articles

- Associated Press: [Europe swelters under scorching temperatures as regions issue heat alerts](#)
- Politico interview with Marisol Yglesias González, Technical Officer for Climate change and Health: [Lethal heat is Europe's new climate reality](#)

For further information please contact us at europress@who.int

4. WHO/Europe coordination

For further information or support regarding preparedness, readiness, and response to heatwaves and wildfires in the health sector, please contact:

Preparedness, Readiness and Public Health Advice For inquiries related to technical guidance on preparedness, readiness and public health advice.	<i>Country Health Emergency Preparedness and International Health Regulations</i> eurocpi@who.int
Acute Public Health Events For reporting and inquiries related to acute public health signals and events in the European Region.	<i>WHO Europe Regional IHR focal point</i> euroihr@who.int
Emergency Response and Coordination For matters related to emergency response and coordination.	<i>WHO Europe Emergency Operations Center</i> euroeoc@who.int
Climate change and health For technical questions on climate change (including heat) and its impacts on health, and the #KeepCool campaign.	<i>WHO European Centre for Environment and Health</i> euroclimate@who.int
Media requests	<i>WHO Europe Press Office</i> europress@who.int