UCLA Luskin Center for Innovation | Informing effective and equitable environmental policy

Communication as a Heat Solution

How do outreach and engagement fit into local heat strategy?

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Illustrating the intersection of heat + energy + health in buildings

Needs

- Healthy temperatures
- Healthy air quality
- Energy access

Interventions

- Efficient, electric appliances
- Affordable energy
- Weatherization
- Cooling equipment

Outcomes

- Health
- Financial
- Learning
- Environment

Primary local heat interventions

Direct resources for cooling access

- ➔ in homes and schools (cooling equipment, energy bill assistance, etc.)
- ➔ in public spaces (cooling/resilience centers and others)

Infrastructure, planning, and policy

- ➔ Green spaces and shade-casting features
- ➔ Holistic planning for heat management/mitigation
- ➔ Tailoring building codes and other regulations

Outreach and engagement

- ➔ Encouraging and informing behavior change
- ➔ Promoting public resources
- ➔ Communicating across decision-makers

Communication as a heat solution

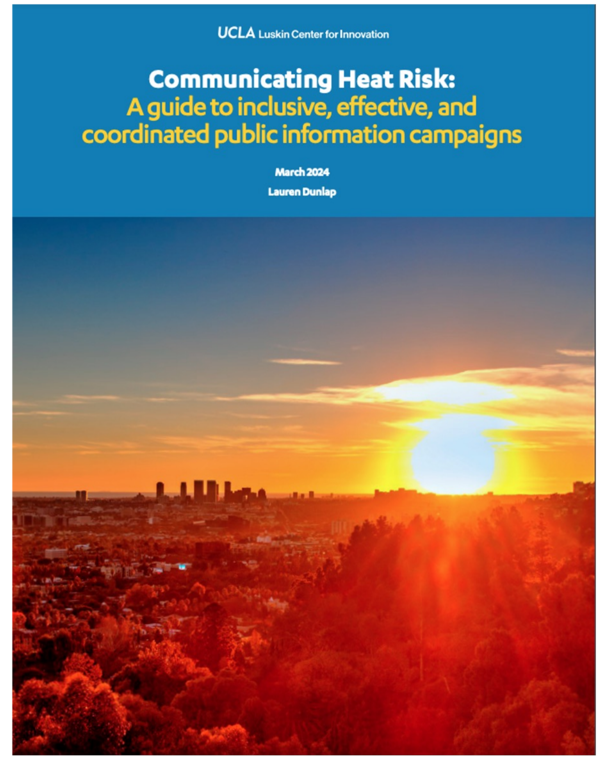
Local governments are major heat communicators!

Goals for communicators:

- convey seriousness of heat
- share information and resources
- learn from public what works and what is needed

Goal for 2024 Report:

Help communicators think about audiences, tactics, coordination, and limitations



“Communicating Heat Risk” Report

This report shares insights from 19 heat communicators at 13 organizations:

These organizations and interviewees do not necessarily endorse the report's findings and recommendations

Challenges and barriers to heat communication

For communicators:

- Lack of staff time, funding, and other resources for communicators
- Difficulty of crafting clear messages on a complex, multidimensional topic
- Lack of standardized messaging, temperature thresholds, etc.

For audiences:

- Don't take heat threat seriously
  "That's for people who are older, not me"
  "Of course it's going to be hot — that's just life"
- Information overload
- Lack of resources to address heat in response to successful outreach
  (e.g., low-income households, under-resourced senior centers and schools)

RECOMMENDATION

Deeply engage heat-impacted communities — and decision-makers, too

Identify heat-impacted communities by risk factor and exposure setting

Seek feedback on what works, what doesn't, and where more is needed

Target decision-makers, too!

RECOMMENDATION

Craft messaging to convey the threat of heat and what can be done

Treat heat like the emergency it is

Tailor content to be highly relevant to each audience

Be cognizant of capacity and valid hesitance to act

Understand and navigate the limitations of communication

RECOMMENDATION

Build campaigns that use all feasible tactics and prioritize trusted messenger networks

Create cohesive campaigns using many tactics

- Prioritize trusted messenger networks
- Use thoughtful, tailored direct outreach
- Use social media — but don't rely on it
- Invest in traditional and ethnic media outlets

RECOMMENDATION

Coordinate and distribute responsibilities among state, regional, and local communicators

Coordinate for consistent and efficient region-wide communication

Make use of coordination, resources, and support from the state

Each locality can conduct tailored, community-specific outreach

RISK FACTORS

- High sensitivity
- High exposure
- Low adaptive capacity

EXPOSURE SETTINGS

- Homes
- Schools / children's facilities
- Workplaces
- Senior facilities
- Prisons / carceral facilities
- Public outdoor spaces
- Transit stops

HEAT-IMPACTED COMMUNITIES & TARGET AUDIENCES

	PRIMARY RISK FACTOR	SELECTED EXPOSURE SETTINGS
Adults 65+	Age	
Children	Age	
Pregnant people	Health status	
People with health conditions	Health status	
People with disabilities	Disability	
Unhoused people	Housing	
Manufactured/mobile home residents	Housing	
People in polluted places	Location	
Rural communities	Location	
Urban communities	Location	
People living in hotter areas	Location	
Transit users	Mobility	
Student athletes	Daily activity	
Workers	Daily activity	
People without air conditioning	Lack of resources	
Renters	Restricted choices	
Low-income people	Lack of resources	
People who are incarcerated	Restricted choices	
Non-English speakers and immigrants	Restricted access to systems	

GRAPHICS

Identifying heat-impacted communities

GRAPHICS

A starting point for tailored tactics

(Not definitive or comprehensive!)

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- Manufactured/mobile home residents
- Unhoused people
- People in polluted places
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- Urban communities
- People living in hotter areas
- Transit users
- Student athletes
- Workers
- Renters
- Low-income people
- People who are incarcerated
- Non-English speakers and immigrants

HEAT COMMUNICATION TACTICS

TRUSTED MESSENGERS

- ambassadors
- community-based organizations
- healthcare providers
- local businesses
- religious & faith networks
- school staff
- senior facilities
- unions

... and many more!

SOCIAL MEDIA

E.g., Facebook, Instagram, Nextdoor, Reddit, TikTok, X, Youtube

Each platform will reach different audiences, but this breakdown is out of scope.

PHYSICAL MATERIALS

- billboards
- bus wraps and bus stop ads
- handouts (flyers, pamphlets, etc.)

ON-DEMAND INFORMATION

- apps
- phone hotlines
- websites

TRADITIONAL MEDIA

- digital news
- ethnic media
- newspapers
- radio
- television

DIRECT ENGAGEMENT

- in-person canvassing
- text messages
- emergency alerts
- emails (e.g., newsletters)
- surveys
- outreach through govt. programs
- public meetings & workshops
- focus groups & listening sessions

Thank you!

More Heat Resources from UCLA Luskin Center for Innovation:

State Heat Policy Series
Policy briefs, fact sheets, and infographics on heat management in homes, schools, and other settings

National Shade Map (New!)
Hyperlocal shade maps in 360+ cities, created in partnership with American Forests

All Heat Research
Our researchers continue to provide actionable data and guidance in several key areas