



# As Extreme Heat Intensifies, Broader Cooling Solutions Are Needed

Temperatures are reaching historic highs. Heatwaves are arriving earlier in the season and lasting longer. Considering these unprecedented weather patterns, communities are in urgent need of more comprehensive strategies to protect their residents from harm.

In a 174-year period of climate reporting conducted by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, 2023 was the warmest year on record by far. Researchers have predicted 2024 is likely to surpass it.

This trend indicates a dangerous path in which cities cannot keep up with rising temperatures and offer safety and refuge for every member of the community. [Extreme heat kills more people than any other weather-related event](#) and exacerbates a wide variety of illnesses including cardiovascular disease and mental health challenges.



## Extreme Heat Is Deadlier Than Hurricanes, Floods and Tornadoes Combined

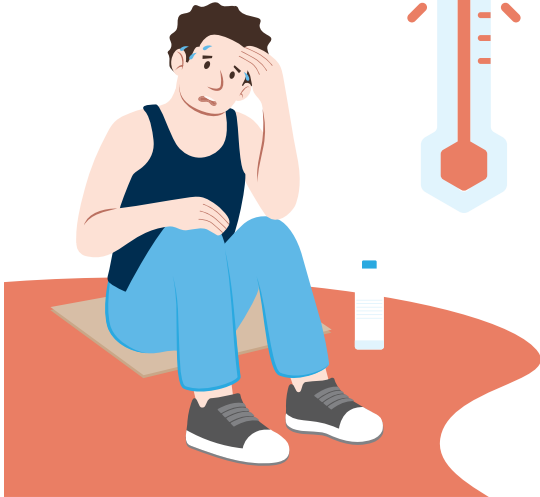
### Heat-Related Illness and Death

Exposure to extreme heat causes three common illnesses. While heat cramps and heat exhaustion are relatively easily treated by cooling the body down (with air conditioning, cool cloths, or drinking chilled water or sports drinks), heat stroke can lead to seizures, comas, or death. In addition to these localized illnesses, heat can worsen underlying conditions and put medically vulnerable groups at high risk of death.

With heatwaves intensifying across the country, heat-related deaths are rising at an alarming rate. In a two-year period between the summers of 2021 and 2023, [reported deaths increased by 43.7%](#). Even with this spike, researchers estimate it is still a gross underestimate: when considering secondary circumstances surrounding death counts, they assert the number of heat-caused deaths in 2023 alone was [closer to 11,000 compared to the reported 2,302](#).

If these trends continue, international health experts predict a [370% surge in yearly heat deaths by 2050](#). No community is prepared to protect their residents from this drastic change—and vulnerable populations such as those living unsheltered are put at the highest risk.

# The risk of heat-related death is **200-300X** higher for people living unsheltered than for the general public.



## Disproportionate Effects on Vulnerable Groups

Climate-related disasters and extreme weather are [particularly hazardous](#) for unhoused communities, elderly populations, and those living with disabilities or pre-existing medical conditions. When combined with underlying illnesses like cardiovascular or kidney disease or substance use, heat that could be sustained by a healthy person is rendered life-threatening.

The City of Phoenix's Office of Heat Response and Mitigation estimates [people experiencing homelessness are at 200-300 times higher risk of death](#) than the general population. Los Angeles reported that [unhoused populations accounted for nearly half of their heat-related deaths in 2022](#). These statistics point to an issue that reverberates across the U.S.—not only in cities that historically experience extreme heat, but also areas with typically milder temperatures lacking appropriate cooling infrastructure to protect their residents.

The [week-long heat wave that killed 800 people](#) across the traditionally temperate Pacific Northwest region in 2021 is an apt example. It is also part of a larger trend: **between 1990 and 2019, deaths caused by extreme heat increased by 74% —with vulnerable groups overrepresented due to a shortage of life-saving measures.**

To address this worsening crisis, communities urgently need to increase permanent cooling infrastructure as well as invest in temporary solutions.

## Comprehensive Cooling Solutions are Needed

Communities can achieve heat resilience by investing in and providing more equitable options across the board. Along with cooling centers, emergency notifications, and installing air conditioning in public spaces and housing, interim solutions like Pallet® can make a substantial positive impact.

In addition to the ability to be quickly installed, our individual shelter units are climate controlled and able to stay cool in extremely hot temperatures. Cities can store units and deploy them as needed in a heat-related crisis to accommodate their vulnerable residents, and our 400-square-foot Community structure can act as a rapidly available cooling center.

This two-fold approach—expanding permanent infrastructure and investing in rapid interim solutions—is key to [building true climate resilience](#) and protecting every member of the community from harm.



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