Information:

Since the introduction of the Community Heat Response Plan in 2008, several intense heat events have tested the effectiveness of our existing service channels and the merits of the Plan. The Plan proved to be very successful in helping citizens safely respond to these events. This success resulted in improved community partner involvement and an increased awareness of the importance of citizens looking out for one another, especially our most vulnerable citizens. In 2011, the Community Services Department (CSD) and Public Health Services Department (PHSD) will again utilize the Plan.

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with information about the Community Heat Response Plan (the Plan). The Plan’s purpose is to coordinate and guide activities that assist citizens in safely responding to intense and prolonged heat events. Activities include alerting the public of imminent or existing hot weather conditions, and providing appropriate precautions, support, and information to those who are most at risk of heat-related illness.
The Plan increasingly leverages services and service providers already in place in the community to maximize effectiveness, minimize costs and improve collaboration between community partners and City departments.

Existing and new activities for 2011 are as follows:

**Pre Heat-Season Preparation:**

CSD, PHSD and the Red Cross provide heat awareness sessions and information to applicable City departments and community partners.

**Public Education:**

- **Existing:** Education and awareness continue to be our citizens’ best defence against heat-related illness. PHSD continues to take the lead with advisory notices during heat events, precautionary information, and coping strategies. CSD ensures communication and collaboration prior to, during and post heat-season with community partners and community groups. CSD also conducts heat awareness training, distributes heat awareness materials and provides updated information about where and how the public can access designated Cool Places.

- **New:** This year, training sessions include an overview of the Air Quality Health Index Tool (AQHI) from Environment Canada as air quality events often coincide with heat events, creating greater health challenges for many Hamiltonians. This is the first year the Plan is allied with Emergency Medical Services (EMS) for the heat season. Paramedics already responding to a call will now be able to provide heat-health information and support to a citizen in need. In addition, By-law Enforcement will include heat awareness information and support in their day-to-day interactions with tenants and landlords.

**Cool Places:**

- **Existing:** In 2011, the City will again utilize Cool Places in the community where the public can find short-term relief from the heat. Many of these Cool Places are City facilities and several are operated by community partners.

- **New:** For 2011, there are an additional 13 public Cool Places. In total, there are 78 Cool Places, of which 48 are open to the public, including all Citizen Service Centres and 30 that are opened for clients only. There are also 50 spray-pad locations with three designated as having extended hours during heat events.
Cooling Centres:

- **Existing:** In 2010, Cooling Centres were scheduled to open as directed by the Chair of the CSD Emergency Control Group and the General Manager of CSD when the city reached a Stage 3 Heat Alert. These facilities suspended their regular programming and followed the shelter management approach, including the set-up of cots that are used for other City emergencies. City staff was actively involved in the operation of these centres as was the Red Cross.

- **New:** In the fall of 2010, community partners and representatives from CSD and PHSD met, reviewed and suggested improvements for the 2011 season. They concluded that the Cooling Centres were very resource-heavy to maintain and were only attended by five citizens in total. Though they enjoyed some relief from the heat, neither the attention of the Red Cross nor shelter management staff was required. It was suggested that Cooling Centre locations become Cool Places in 2011 and resources be focused on extending outreach to connect with citizens needing the most support. As Cool Places, these locations would, in fact, open earlier in a heat event. Should a heat event become more extreme than covered in the Community Heat Response Plan, the CSD Emergency Operations Centre could be activated and shelters could be opened if that was determined to be an appropriate response to the emergency.

Extended Pool Hours:

- **Existing:** City outdoor pools have extended operating hours beginning at the Heat Warning stage (two or more days with a humidex expected to be 40 or greater).

Mobile Water Distribution:

- **Existing:** The Salvation Army operates a mobile water distribution program that targets our homeless population. At the Heat Warning stage (two or more days with a humidex of 40 or greater) the program will provide water at Gore Park in Hamilton. The City’s Public Works Department will supply clear bags for pick-up and recycling of any litter associated with water distribution.

Outreach:

- **Existing:** “Telephone Assurance” is operated by some community partners who contact their high-risk clients by telephone. During the heat season, they determine how their clients are coping with the heat and offer strategies and information to assist them. In addition, EMS, Police, and community partners of the Plan observe and respond to citizens in their homes and on the street, offering water and other necessities.
New: EMS and the Community Care Access Centre (CCAC) are now collaborating to assess citizens’ needs and provide appropriate resources. By-Law Enforcement Officers are now working with tenants and landlords, through the inspection process, to improve awareness and response to heat-health issues in residences. The Victorian Order of Nurses is providing heat health materials to their community nurses and adult care centre as part of client care. Bookmobile Services will carry a variety of heat health materials for citizens as well as the list of Cool Place locations. Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board will share heat health and Cool Place location information with students and families.

Research was completed at McMaster University Institute of Environment and Health addressing how climate change and variability affects human health, particularly in certain vulnerable subpopulations of Hamilton. Our PHSD uses this information in the work they do and this year we are able to use the research findings for the Plan. The City’s Geographic Information System (GIS) has applied these findings to create a map showing the various health risk layers, such as “elderly living alone” as one example, and applying a layer of Cool Place locations. Through this we can identify gaps in the numbers or locations of Cool Place locations available to our citizens at greatest risk and respond where necessary.

Post Heat-Season Review:

The CSD, in partnership with the PHSD and community partners, reviews the season’s heat response activities to identify areas for continuation and improvement.

2011 Community Partners:

1. Canadian Red Cross;
2. Good Shepherd Centres;
3. Community Living;
4. Salvation Army;
5. Meridian Housing Coop;
6. Mission Services;
7. Kiwanis Boys & Girls Clubs of Hamilton;
8. Hamilton Urban Core;
9. Housing Help Centre;
10. Wesley Urban Ministries;
11. Wellington Psychiatric Outreach Programs;
12. Victorian Order of Nurses (VON);
13. Dundas Community Services;
14. St. Matthews House and Seniors Centre;
15. Roxborough Seniors Centre;
16. YMCA;
17. YWCA;
18. Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board;
19. Brain Injury Services;
20. Canadian mental health Association;
21. Community Care Access Centre;
22. Canadian National Institute for the Blind;
23. Community Action Program for Children;
24. Health Canada; and,
25. McQuesten Community Centre.

Background:

The heat season begins on the May Victoria long-weekend and ends after the September Labour Day long-weekend. The Plan is activated during this time but community collaboration begins prior to the start and extends past the end of the heat season. The Plan utilizes education, awareness and response tools and actions to best serve the citizens of Hamilton.

There are three potential stages within a heat “event” and different responses occur within each. They are outlined as follows:

• **Stage 1 – Heat Advisory (1 day with humidex expected to be 40 or greater):**
  • PHSD communication by telephone (Everbridge System) and email to community agencies, partners and media;
  • A telephone notification system is activated to inform 112 contacts in the CSD and other internal partners; and,
  • 67 Cool Places and 50 spray pads are utilized at this stage.

• **Stage 2 – Heat Warning (2 or more days with a humidex expected to be 40 or greater):**
  • PHSD’s Everbridge System and email notifies community agencies, partners and media of the change in heat status;
  • 112 contacts in the CSD and other internal partners are notified of the heat status change;
  • 11 more Cool Places are activated in addition to the initial 67 Cool Places and 50 spray pads;
  • Extended hours for outdoor City pools (8); and,
  • Mobile water distribution by the Salvation Army.

• **Stage 3 – Heat Alert (4 or more days with a humidex expected to be 40 or greater OR 1 or more days with a 45 or greater humidex):**
  • PHSD’s Everbridge System and email notifies community agencies, partners and media of the change in heat status;
• 112 contacts in the CSD and other internal partners are notified of the heat status change;
• All 78 community Cool Places are activated and pools have extended hours; and,
• Mobile water distribution by the Salvation Army.

**Stand-down – (Humidex is below 40):**

• PHSD’s Everbridge System notifies community agencies, partners and media of the cancellation of the heat event and returns to monitoring;
• 112 contacts in the CSD and other internal partners are notified about the cancellation of the heat event and returns to monitoring; and,
• All community Cool Places are deactivated and pools return to regular hours and programming.

These strategies support an ever-evolving community view of heat response through leveraging capacity and working together with our community partners. This in turn helps our citizens to “beat the heat” by increasing knowledge and awareness of heat health and encouraging citizens to look out for one another.