

Extreme Heat & Drought

A practical guide for short-term rental (STR) operators to prepare, respond, and recover from extreme heat and drought events.



PREPARE

Before the Event

- Review & update plans
- Train your team
- Inspect systems
- Verify insurance coverage



RESPOND

During the Event

- Activate your plan
- Communicate clearly
- Coordinate local contacts
- Document everything



RECOVER

After the Event

- Support your team
- File claims promptly
- Serve your community
- Update your plan

WHY THIS MATTERS



Extreme heat is the deadliest weather event in the United States, killing more people each year than hurricanes, tornadoes, and floods combined. Heat events create immediate operational challenges: HVAC failures, outdoor teams, along with laundry teams, safety obligations, guest health emergencies, and water restrictions during drought.



BEFORE THE EVENT - PREPARE NOW



Extreme Heat Response Plan:

Your Extreme Heat Response Plan should include heat risk and heat index thresholds, UV Index considerations for outdoor work modifications, HVAC failure contingency protocols (including guest relocation plans), water conservation tiers for drought conditions, and procedures for checking on vulnerable guests. When temperatures rise, clear plans lead to faster decisions.



Protecting Your Team During Extreme Heat:

Your team may be working in conditions that can quickly become dangerous. Establish heat safety protocols that include hydration, rest breaks, shade access, and modified work schedules during periods of extreme heat. Review applicable state regulations and OSHA guidance for your area, but remember that caring for your team goes beyond compliance.



HVAC Inspection at Every Property Before Summer Season:

Service every HVAC system well before the busy season. Verify every unit is functional and verify the backup plan if a unit fails during a heat event. Properties that rely on window units for cooling should have a specific guest relocation plan identified in advance.





BEFORE THE EVENT

PREPARE NOW



HVAC is a Guest Safety System During Heat Events:

Communicate to property owners that HVAC maintenance is not optional in heat markets; it is a guest safety and liability issue. Recommend an HVAC service contract for properties in heat-exposed markets and document your recommendation.



Water Conservation Protocol for Drought Conditions:

In drought-affected markets, understand your municipal water restriction tiers and what they mean for each property you manage: pool refills, irrigation, laundry operations, and guest water use. Create a written tier-based conservation plan and communicate it to owners before restrictions are imposed, not after.



Review Business Interruption (BI) Coverage for Heat-Related Closure:

Most BI policies do not cover heat-related closures unless tied to a declared disaster. Review your policy language with your agent. If a property becomes legally uninhabitable due to HVAC failure during a heat wave, understand whether your policy covers the resulting lost bookings. If not, document this gap for owners.



DURING THE EVENT

RESPOND NOW

1

Monitor Heat Index, Not Just Temperature

Air temperature alone does not measure danger; humidity is the critical factor. Check the local heat index at the start of each day during summer. Share the daily heat index with all outdoor staff and update your HVAC check protocol accordingly.

2

Heat Illness Recognition and Response

Heat Exhaustion: heavy sweating, weakness, cold/clammy skin, rapid pulse. Move to a cool area, hydrate, loosen clothing, and call 911 if there is no improvement.

Heat Stroke: hot/dry skin, confusion, very high body temperature, call 911 immediately.

3

Vulnerable Guest Check-In Protocol

Notify incoming guests of any heat advisories through email, text messages, and website updates so they can plan accordingly and take appropriate precautions during their stay.

4

Outdoor Team Activity Modification

When the heat index reaches dangerous levels, increase hydration breaks, provide shade access, modify work schedules where possible, and reduce strenuous outdoor tasks. When local heat advisories are in effect, increase team check-ins and adjust outdoor activities as needed to protect employee safety.

SUPPORTING YOUR EMPLOYEES

Your employees are not just team members; they may be personally impacted by the same event affecting your properties. How you treat your team during a disaster defines your culture and determines whether your best people return. Consider providing cooling stations, shaded rest areas, and adjusted work schedules during prolonged heat events.



AFTER THE EVENT LEAD YOUR RECOVERY



HVAC and Equipment Assessment Post-Heat Event:

Extended heat events stress HVAC compressors, refrigeration units, and electrical systems. Heat-related equipment failures often appear 5-10 days after a peak event.



Owner Reporting on Heat-Related Incidents:

Provide owners with a brief post-event summary: any HVAC issues, guest complaints, and your property condition assessment. If repairs were authorized, include receipts and documentation.



Water System Review After Drought Conditions:

After a drought event or an extended water-restriction period, flush all water systems and test water quality before resuming normal guest operations.



Team Debrief and Wellbeing Check:

Conduct a team debrief after any significant heat event. Ask specifically: Were outdoor tasks manageable? Did staff feel empowered to take breaks? Were the heat thresholds in the plan workable? Update your plan based on their direct feedback. Staff who work safely through heat events and feel heard about it return next season.



Update Your Extreme Heat Response Plan:

Review and update your written Extreme Heat Response Plan within 30 days. Were your HVAC failure protocols fast enough? Did your outdoor staff thresholds protect your team? Were your guest communication templates effective? Revise and share as needed.



Community Role:

If you can offer cooling areas to help other members in your community, consider becoming a safe space for others. Your visible community leadership strengthens long-term reputation and trust.



EMERGENCY RESOURCES

QUICK REFERENCE



EXTREME HEAT TRACKING

OSHA HEAT APP

Ideal for outdoor workers and supervisors. It calculates the heat index for your specific geographic location and provides daily risk levels, rest break reminders, and first-aid guidelines

[osha.gov/heat-exposure](https://www.osha.gov/heat-exposure)



HEAT STRESS MONITORING

HEAT STRESS

The [AIHA Heat Stress application](#), a mobile app developed by AIHA and East Carolina University, helps prevent heat-related illnesses by providing safety recommendations and risk guidance for workers and supervisors.

[heat.gov](https://www.heat.gov)



GUEST COMMUNICATION CHECKLIST

- ✓ Heat Advisory in the Area
- ✓ Heat Illness Recognition
- ✓ HVAC & Water Systems Review
- ✓ Outdoor Activity Modifications
- ✓ Wellness Checks



EMERGENCY CONTACTS

Emergency **911** _____

Fire Department _____

Poison Control _____

Utility Provider _____

Insurance _____



INSURANCE & FINANCIAL RESOURCES

- Contact your insurance provider immediately after the event
- FEMA Disaster Assistance: [disasterassistance.gov](https://www.disasterassistance.gov)
- SBA Disaster Loans: [sba.gov/disaster](https://www.sba.gov/disaster)



STRONGER TOGETHER

Hospitality Heroes is a registered non-profit 501(c)(3) dedicated to equipping hospitality professionals with the skills, systems, and community connections they need to navigate disasters or crises and recover stronger.

