




Be Cool, Durham - Beat the Heat!

Welcome to the Durham County Sustainability Team's monthly blog! Each month, we spotlight a different sustainability-style topic in a fun format with simple tips, local resources, and creative ideas about how to live more thoughtfully in our communities with the wonderful planet in mind. Learn more about our work at Durham County Sustainability at GreenerDurham.net 

 Summer is almost here - and in Durham that means HEAT. Not just uncomfortable heat, we're talking extreme heat. In the United States, **extreme heat** is the leading cause of weather-related death. And here in the NC Piedmont, it's also the number one climate emergency that will most affect us.

Sorry to be a downer... let's just **Be Cool, Durham!**

We want to give a BIG shoutout to all the **Durham County Public Health workers!** We enjoyed meeting you at the Wellness events recently and glad to include you on our Sustainability Blog. We appreciate all you do 

The Durham County Sustainability Team has been braving the elements and tabled at a handful of events these past couple of months to talk with folks about topics like extreme heat. Here's us at Duke EarthFest in April:



Speaking of significant events - Back in May, Governor Josh Stein had proclaimed May 18-22 as [Heat Safety Week](#) in North Carolina to raise awareness about the health risks that come with rising temperatures and share [heat safety tips](#).

And today, on Tuesday, June 2nd, communities around the world are coming together for the 5th Annual [International Heat Action Day!](#) It's a global day of awareness and action, and this year's theme puts the spotlight on **indoor heat** - the health risks we face inside our homes, schools, workplaces, places of worship, care facilities, and more. When it gets dangerously hot in Durham, the danger doesn't stop at the front door.

The Heat Inside

We tend to think of heat risk as an outdoor problem - but indoor heat can become a real danger zone, especially without good insulation, shading, or reliable air conditioning. It disproportionately affects the very young and old, people with pre-existing health conditions, and those who can't afford cooling and often historically disadvantaged.

Here's how to keep your indoor spaces cooler:

- Run the fans!
- Cover windows with blinds, curtains, or reflective shades - especially south and west-facing ones
- Weather-strip doors and windows to keep cool air in (this is a good DIY trick)
- Upgrade your energy efficiency (check out [Energy Saver NC's HOMES & HEAR programs!](#))

Staying Cool

During extreme heat events, remember: WATER. REST. SHADE.

- Drink 2-3 bottles of water every hour
- Never leave people or pets in a hot car
- When outside, use hats, umbrellas, hand-held fans, and cooling towels
- Avoid hottest times of day. Seek out air conditioning (Durham County libraries, community centers, and recreation centers are all great public options)
- Watch yourself and other for: Dizziness, confusion, thirst, nausea, weakness, heavy sweating (see what do when noticing signs of heat exhaustion/stroke below)

Know the signs & act fast:

Heat Exhaustion

Signs: Heavy sweating, dizziness, nausea, pale skin, weakness

Action: Move to cool space, sip fluids, rest

Heat Stroke

Signs: Body temp above 103°F, hot dry skin, confusion, no sweat

Action: Call 911 immediately. Heat stroke is a medical emergency - Don't wait.

Sign Up for Heat Alerts!

The Climate & Health team with the NC Department of Health & Human Services sends [Heat Health Alerts](#) when the heat index is forecast to reach dangerous levels in your region. It's free, it's fast - and it could save a life.

Sign up for NC Heat Health Alerts [HERE](#)

Already signed up? Share the link with a neighbor, coworker, or anyone in your life who could be at risk ❤️

Check Your Local Heat & Health Data

Want to see how heat is affecting health in your community specifically? The CDC's [Heat & Health Tracker](#) analyzes local heat index and health outcomes by county.

And curious how much hotter Durham has gotten in your lifetime? The NY Times has a cool [interactive tool](#) to show just that.

One of the Coolest Things You Can Do?

Check On Each Other.

The most powerful heat protection tool we have isn't a technology - it's each other. During heat events, check on your neighbors, especially:

- Older adults living alone
- Young children
- People without AC or reliable cooling
- People working outdoors
- People who are unhoused
- Anyone with a chronic illness or mental health issue
- Anyone who takes medication on a regular basis (tends to be less effective in the heat)

A knock on the door or a quick phone call can literally save a life. That's resilience in action. ❤️

Resources - Go Deeper

 [International Heat Action Day - IFRC](#)

 [Heat Toolkit - PrepareCenter](#)

 [#BeatTheHeat Resources](#)

 [NC Heat Health Alert Sign-Up](#)

 [CDC Heat & Health Tracker](#)

 [How Much Hotter Is Your City? - NYT](#)

 [IFRC: What Is a Heat Wave?](#)

 [IFRC: Prepare for a Heat Wave](#)

Thank You.

Be cool & stay connected, Durham 

~ Your Durham County Sustainability Team

[GreenerDurham.net](#)

Have a specific topic you'd like to see in a future issue? Email Megan at mpendell@dconc.gov!