
STATEMENT

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Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General
BC Coroners Service

Chief coroner's statement on public safety during high temperatures

VICTORIA – Lisa Lapointe, chief coroner, has released the following statement about public safety during the increase in heat in B.C.:

“During the last heat-wave event, the BC Coroners Service received an unprecedented number of reports of sudden and unexpected deaths across the province.

“We have now confirmed that, from June 20 to July 29, 569 people died as a result of the extreme heat. This number is preliminary and subject to increase as additional reported deaths are entered into our system. The number of deaths reported is a 300% increase over the number of deaths that had been reported to the BC Coroners Service during the same period in previous years.

“After preliminary review, we are now able to provide the age ranges of those who died as a result of the extreme heat. The data confirms what is known about the risks of extreme heat for older individuals and shows that British Columbia’s seniors were most impacted by this event. Of those who died, 79% were age 65 or older, 65% were age 70 or older and 40% were age 80 or older. Our hearts go out to all of those who lost a beloved elder family member or friend during this unprecedented extreme heat period.

“We are continuing to gather information about the circumstances of the deaths and will release data as it becomes available. We know there is significant interest from agencies and communities across the province for any information we can provide to support efforts to prevent similar deaths in the future.

“We are again about to experience unusually high temperatures in some parts of the province this weekend. Knowing that our older residents are more vulnerable, we ask that you please look out for family, friends and neighbours, particularly those who are elderly and live alone. Whenever possible, people are encouraged to visit cooler environments, such as cooling centres, malls, libraries and other air-conditioned community spaces for essential respite from the effects of severe heat.

“Anecdotally, our coroners reported that many of the deaths experienced were amongst those living alone in private residences with minimal ventilation. We will continue to gather more detailed information to inform safety strategies.”

British Columbians are encouraged to visit the following site for valuable advice on staying safe during extreme weather: <https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2021HLTH0136-001486>

Learn More:

For news and updates on heat-related deaths in B.C., visit:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/life-events/death/coroners-service/news-and-updates/heat-related>

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