



---

## NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release  
2021PSSG0085-002074  
Nov. 1, 2021

Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General  
BC Coroners Service

### **Almost 600 lives lost to extreme heat in summer 2021**

VICTORIA – This past summer’s record-breaking heat claimed the lives of at least 595 British Columbians, according to updated data released by the BC Coroners Service.

“The BC Coroners Service is committed to gathering as much information as possible about each of these deaths to inform future, evidence-based prevention efforts” said Lisa Lapointe, chief coroner. “I extend my sincere condolences to all of those who lost a loved one as a result of last summer’s unprecedented heat dome. By identifying patterns and factors in the tragic deaths that occurred unexpectedly last summer, our province will be in a better position to prevent future similar tragedies.”

Multiple heat-related deaths were recorded in communities throughout B.C. this summer. The largest number of deaths took place between June 25 and July 1, 2021, when a heat-dome weather event resulted in numerous temperature records being set throughout the province. At least 526 deaths occurred during this event, and several of the deaths recorded in the days and weeks following were due to injuries sustained during the heat-dome period.

Consistent with International Classification of Diseases definitions, the BC Coroners Service considers a death heat-related when:

- the localized environment or the body temperature of a decedent is consistent with hyperthermia; or
- there is no direct temperature at the time of death, but there is evidence to support that heat had a significant causal effect on the death.

Nearly three-quarters of the deaths recorded between June 25 and July 1 occurred in either the Fraser (273) or Vancouver Coastal (120) health authority regions. The provincewide death rate during this period was 10.1 per 100,000 residents. Individuals aged 70 or older accounted for 69% of deaths. No heat-related deaths among children were reported.

The BC Coroners Service expects to have completed individual investigations of each of the 595 heat-related deaths by early 2022. At that time, the service will convene a death review panel consisting of subject-matter experts who will create recommendations intended to prevent similar deaths in the future. The findings of the panel are expected to be publicly released in late spring 2022.

“While we expect the findings of the death review will significantly contribute to efforts to increase public safety, we must take steps to prepare for future extreme weather events now,” Lapointe said. “The effects of climate change are both real and unpredictable. Having a plan to regularly check in with loved ones who live alone, being aware of cooler and air-conditioned areas in your neighbourhood, and heeding early warnings about extreme weather are simple

steps that will help ensure we are all properly prepared and safe.”

Additional key preliminary findings regarding the deaths recorded between June 25 and July 1 are below. Data is subject to change as individual investigations are concluded:

- The highest numbers of deaths were recorded on June 28 (131 deaths) and June 29 (231 deaths).
- The percentage of female (51%) and male (49%) heat-related deaths were similar.
- The highest rates of death by Health Service Delivery Area were in Fraser North (17.4 per 100,000), Fraser East (15.1 per 100,000) and Vancouver (13.7 per 100,000).
- The three townships experiencing the highest number of deaths were Vancouver (99), Surrey (67) and Burnaby (63).
- Ninety-six per cent of heat-related injuries occurred in a residential setting.

**Learn More:**

Knowledge Update on Heat-Related Deaths in B.C.:

[https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/birth-adoption-death-marriage-and-divorce/deaths/coroners-service/statistical/heat\\_related\\_deaths\\_in\\_bc\\_knowledge\\_update.pdf](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/birth-adoption-death-marriage-and-divorce/deaths/coroners-service/statistical/heat_related_deaths_in_bc_knowledge_update.pdf)

**Contact:**

Ryan Panton  
Manager  
Strategic Communications and Media  
Relations  
BC Coroners Service  
236 478-1582

---

Connect with the Province of B.C. at: [news.gov.bc.ca/connect](https://news.gov.bc.ca/connect)