



ACR 109: State Response to Extreme Heat

IN BRIEF

ACR 109 would affirm the Legislature's recognition of extreme heat as a serious and urgent threat, and call upon California's public agencies and departments to invest resources in building resilience to extreme heat with prioritization given to the most at-risk and vulnerable communities.

BACKGROUND

Extreme heat events have devastating impacts across the state. They pose a threat to public health, infrastructure, agriculture, and water and energy security.

The CDC has estimated an average of 600 heat-related deaths per year in the United States. However, recent studies suggest that this underestimates the number of likely heat-related deaths, which are likely closer to 5,600 on average per year¹. Certain industries are particularly vulnerable, with 20 times more farmworkers dying from extreme heat than workers in other industries².

Workers in both outdoor and indoor workplaces also suffer from heat-related illnesses, which can result not only in lasting health issues, but lost wages and high medical bills. Children attending school, particularly with ill-equipped infrastructure, may also suffer from heat-related illnesses, in addition to interrupted activities and a reduction in the ability to learn.

The bottom 20 percent of the lowest paid workers in the state suffer five times as many heat-related illnesses as those who are among the top 20 percent of the highest paid workers³. Lower income communities and communities of color are also often located in the hottest neighborhoods in cities across the country, and face compounding risk factors, including being less likely to have health insurance, and being less likely to have adequate in-home cooling.

California's Fourth Climate Assessment predicts that even if greenhouse gas emissions are reduced at a moderate rate, extreme heat days as measured in Fresno would still increase from an average of 4 per year in 2005 to 26 per year in 2050⁴. The statewide increased temperatures are expected to translate to up to 4,300 excess deaths in 2025 and up to 11,300 in 2050.

Solutions to mitigate these impacts do exist though, and include nature-based solutions such as increased urban forestry and vegetation in urban areas.

PROBLEM

The impacts of extreme heat can already be seen across California, and they are not only magnifying the effects of other climate challenges, but also pose a growing threat to public health and safety. Low-income communities and communities of color are disproportionately impacted and face elevated risks whether at home, at school, or on the job.

While investments are being made to mitigate sea level rise, wildfires, and other climate-related events, the state is not yet taking sufficient immediate and ambitious action to strengthen its resilience to extreme heat and protect those most vulnerable.

SOLUTION

ACR 109 elevates the discussion and importance of the threat of extreme heat to Californians for both the Legislature and state agencies, in addition to highlighting existing nature-based solutions.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Laurel Brodzinsky

Office of Asm. Gonzalez

916-319-2080 | laurel.brodzinsky@asm.ca.gov

¹https://journals.lww.com/environepidem/fulltext/2020/06000/estimating_the_number_of_excess_deaths.1.aspx

² <https://www.kcra.com/article/cdc-farmworkers-die-more-other-workers-extreme-heat/37162477#>

³ <https://ucla.app.box.com/s/14m6pj1algt7rwb8ihq4lyqjhm2ueejj>

⁴ pg 5, https://www.energy.ca.gov/sites/default/files/2019-11/20180827_Summary_Brochure_ADA.pdf