

Climate Change & Heat

As the Earth's climate warms, hotter-than-usual days are becoming more common. A persistent period of unusually hot days is referred to as an extreme heat event or a heat wave.

Heat waves are occurring more often, lasting longer, and getting hotter.

Frequency

The average number of heat waves per year across major cities.

MORE OFTEN

Increased from 2 heat waves in 1960s to 6 heat waves in 2020s



Duration

The average length of heat waves across major cities.

LONGER

Increased from 3 days in 1960s to 4 days in 2020s



Season

The average time span between the first and last heat wave of the year across major cities.

**STARTING EARLIER
ENDING LATER**

46 days longer in 2020s compared to 1960s



Intensity

The average temperature above a city-specific temperature threshold.

GETTING HOTTER

Increased from 1.9°F in the 1960s to 2.5°F in the 2020s



Heat waves are more than just uncomfortable: they can lead to illness and death.

HEAT-RELATED DEATHS



14,000+ Americans have died from heat-related causes since 1979, according to death certificates.

Taking action: the best defense against extreme heat is to be prepared, and remember...

GET READY.

Stay up to date on your local weather forecast and be aware of extreme heat events.

GET SET.

Know the symptoms of heat-related illnesses and what to do in an emergency.

GO.

Stay cool during heat waves. Avoid being outside during the hottest part of the day.



epa.gov/climate-indicators

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