

# Health alert: Heat health warnings

Information and Guidance

**OFFICIAL**

## Introduction

The Department of Health operates the Extreme Weather Alert System to notify the department's program areas, Victorian government, hospitals, health and community service providers, and councils via email about forecast high maximum and minimum temperatures which are likely to impact human health. These forecasts are actively monitored from 1 December to 1 March, but this can be extended as required.

Due to the introduction of Bureau of Meteorology heatwave warnings on 3 October 2022, the department will replace its heat health alerts with *Health alert: Heat health warnings*. Heat health alert subscribers will automatically be transferred to receive heat health warnings.

A *Health alert: Heat health warning* will be broadcast via email when the Bureau of Meteorology issues a heatwave warning to support the transition of the department's heat health warning subscribers to the Bureau of Meteorology heatwave warnings. The Bureau's heatwave warnings can also be accessed from the Bureau of Meteorology website (<http://www.bom.gov.au/>) or app.

The Chief Health Officer may also issue a *Health alert: Heat health warning* when forecast high maximum and minimum temperatures do not meet the criteria for a Bureau of Meteorology heatwave warning but the Chief Health Officer considers that a heat health risk exists

In the event of a Bureau of Meteorology heatwave warning or Department of Health heat health warning, the department recommends that you continue to monitor local conditions and act in line with your heat, business continuity and occupational health and safety (OH&S) plans. Local weather conditions are available on the [Bureau of Meteorology's 7-day forecast website \(www.bom.gov.au/vic/forecasts/map7day.shtml\)](http://www.bom.gov.au/vic/forecasts/map7day.shtml).

## Bureau of Meteorology

### Heatwave warnings

From 3 October 2022, the Bureau of Meteorology will issue heatwave warnings on their public channels when ten per cent or more of a weather district is in a severe or extreme heatwave based on the Excess Heat Factor (EHF). Heatwave warnings will be issued up to four days prior to the event. The warnings will appear on the Bureau of Meteorology website (<http://www.bom.gov.au/>), the Bureau of Meteorology app (<http://www.bom.gov.au/app/>) and their telephone service.

The EHF is the metric for heatwave in Australia in accordance with the National Heatwave Warnings Framework (2022). It is based on three days of unusually high maximum and minimum temperatures for a location. The EHF categorises heatwave into three levels based on intensity: low-intensity, severe and extreme.

According to the Bureau, most people can cope during low-intensity heatwaves, but those most at risk of extreme heat are likely to find it more challenging. Everyone is at risk during extreme heatwaves, even people who are healthy.

The Bureau of Meteorology's Heatwave Service for Australia also provides heatwave assessments, which identify heatwaves in the preceding days, and heatwave forecasts, which predict those about to occur (**Figure 1**).

The heatwave warnings, Heatwave Service for Australia and additional information about EHF can be found at <http://www.bom.gov.au/australia/heatwave/>.

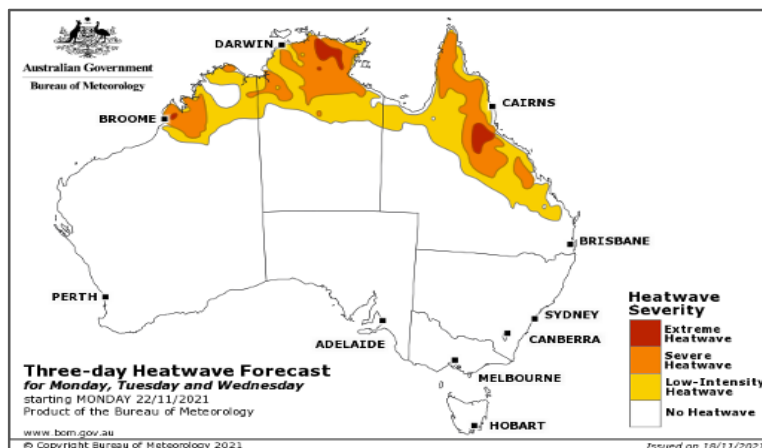


Figure 1. Bureau of Meteorology Heatwave Forecast

## Department of Health

### Health alert: Heat health warning

The Chief Health Officer may issue a *Health alert: Heat health warning* for forecast high maximum and minimum temperatures of concern that do not meet the criteria for a Bureau of Meteorology heatwave warning but where the Chief Health Officer considers that a heat health risk exists.

The heat health warning will be sent via email to heat health warning subscribers for the relevant weather district up to four days in advance.

### Transitioning to Bureau of Meteorology Heatwave Warnings

For summer 2022-23, the department's heat health warning subscribers will receive a *Health alert: Heat health warning* via the Extreme Weather Alert System when the Bureau of Meteorology issues a heatwave warning. The heat health warning will contain a hyperlink to the Bureau of Meteorology website where subscribers can access the details of the heatwave warning.

The department will review these arrangements following this summer season.

### Subscribe to Health alert: Heat health warnings

You can subscribe to receive heat health warnings or manage your subscription to heat health warnings and other emergency advice from the department at [www.health.vic.gov.au/subscribe](http://www.health.vic.gov.au/subscribe). To activate your subscription, please follow the steps outlined in the email sent requesting you to confirm your subscription.

The department's subscription service is available to anyone with an email address.

# Prepare and respond

Prepare for forecast high maximum and minimum temperatures with these activities:

- bookmark and review the Bureau of Meteorology website about heatwaves (<http://www.bom.gov.au/australia/heatwave/>)
- download the Bureau of Meteorology app where you can receive push notifications for forecast heatwaves
- bookmark the VicEmergency website (<https://emergency.vic.gov.au/respond/>) or download the app
- subscribe to the department's *Health alert: Heat health warnings* at [www.health.vic.gov.au/subscribe](http://www.health.vic.gov.au/subscribe)
- update and promote your organisational heat plans with colleagues and stakeholders.

The department recommends that you follow your organisational heat plans once a Health alert: Heat health warning is issued. People in the general community should be encouraged to prepare for extreme heat to protect themselves and those in their care from the impact of extreme heat, particularly those most at risk.

Even though the department will be monitoring forecast temperatures across the state, it is important for local councils and other organisations to continue to monitor local weather conditions. It may be necessary for local councils to activate heat plans in the absence of a heatwave or heat health warning being issued. Councils are encouraged to monitor local weather conditions using the Bureau of Meteorology's 7-day forecast website <[www.bom.gov.au/vic/forecasts/map7day.shtml](http://www.bom.gov.au/vic/forecasts/map7day.shtml)>

## Links for more information

Bureau of Meteorology heatwave warnings

[www.bom.gov.au/australia/heatwave/](http://www.bom.gov.au/australia/heatwave/)

Health alert: Heat health warning

[www2.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/environmental-health/climate-weather-and-public-health/heatwaves-and-extreme-heat](http://www2.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/environmental-health/climate-weather-and-public-health/heatwaves-and-extreme-heat)

Community resources

[www2.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/environmental-health/climate-weather-and-public-health/heatwaves-and-extreme-heat/heatwave-community-resources](http://www2.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/environmental-health/climate-weather-and-public-health/heatwaves-and-extreme-heat/heatwave-community-resources)

Survive the Heat campaign material

[www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/campaigns/survive-heat](http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/campaigns/survive-heat)

To receive this document in another format, phone 1300 761 874, using the National Relay Service 13 36 77 if required, or email the Department of Health on <[extreme.weather@health.vic.gov.au](mailto:extreme.weather@health.vic.gov.au)>.

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Available at the department's website <<https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/environmental-health/climate-weather-and-public-health/heatwaves-and-extreme-heat/heat-health-alerts>>