

Heat health alert system

Information and guidance for local government and other stakeholders

Introduction

The Department of Health and Human Services operates a heat health alert system to notify the department's program areas, hospitals, health and community service providers and the general public via email about forecasted extreme heat conditions which are likely to impact human health. The heat health alert system operates annually between November to the end of March.

A heat health alert is issued when mean temperatures are predicted to reach or exceed heat health thresholds. The department recommends that you continue to monitor local conditions and take action in line with your heat plan, business continuity plan and occupational health and safety (OH&S) plan.

Weather forecast districts

The heat health alert system uses the Bureau of Meteorology weather forecast districts and boundaries, as shown in Figure 1.

Heat health temperature thresholds

Temperature thresholds have been identified for Victoria, above which heat-related illness and mortality increases substantially.

These thresholds differ across the state in recognition of the higher average temperatures experienced in northern parts of Victoria. Temperature thresholds have been established for each of the nine weather forecast districts, as shown in Figure 1.

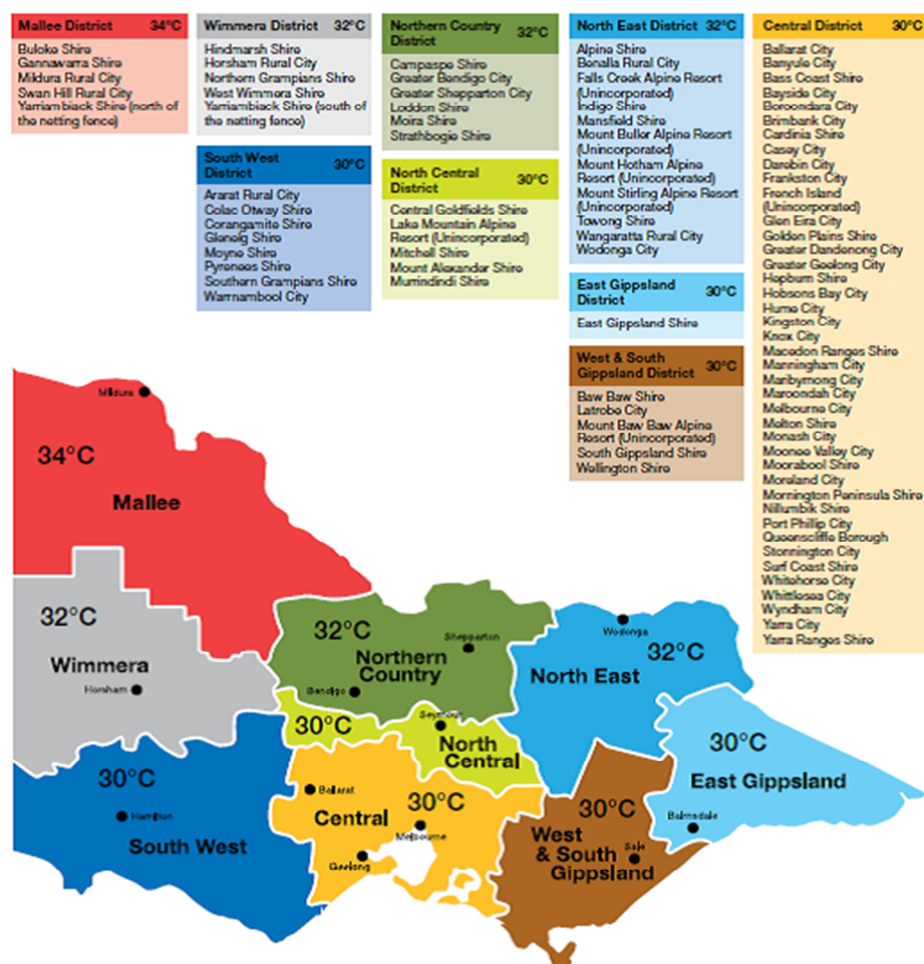


Figure 1: Weather forecast districts and corresponding heat health temperature thresholds

Image adapted from the Country Fire Authority's 'Know your total fire ban district'.

How we decide to issue an alert

The department monitors the Bureau of Meteorology forecast daily minimum and maximum temperatures and calculates the daily average temperature for each weather forecast district, as shown in Figure 2.

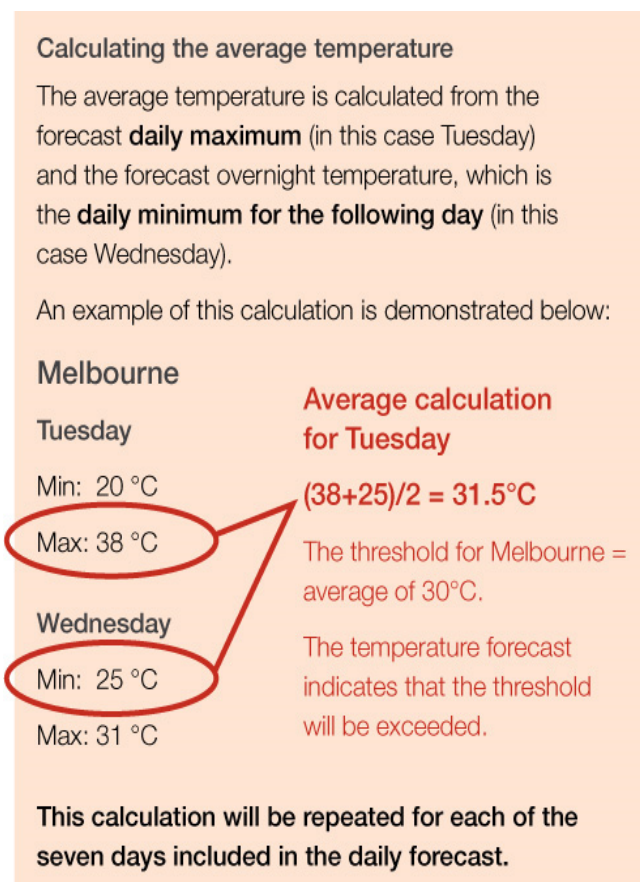


Figure 2: Example calculation of the daily average temperature

The average temperature for any given day is the average of the forecasted daily maximum temperature and the forecasted overnight temperature (which is also the daily minimum for the following day).

When forecast average temperatures are predicted to reach or exceed the heat health temperature threshold the department issues heat health alerts for the appropriate districts.

Heat health alerts

Heat health alerts are issued via the department's email subscription service. To subscribe to receive heat health alerts and other emergency advice from the department go to: www.health.vic.gov.au/subscribe

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

An email will be sent requesting you confirm your subscription. **Please ensure that you activate your subscription by logging in to your email account and following the steps to confirm your subscription.**

The department recommends that organisational heat plans are followed, once a heat health alert is issued.

People in the general community should take action to prepare for extreme heat to protect themselves and those in their care from the impact of extreme heat, particularly those most at risk.

The department may also consider other factors that may influence vulnerability, such as very high maximum or minimum temperatures and high temperatures over a prolonged consecutive period. High temperature alerts may be issued in these circumstances even if the average temperature threshold is not exceeded. Prolonged high temperatures below threshold levels can still impact on health.

Where possible, heat health alerts will be issued 3-4 days prior to forecast extreme heat conditions providing alert recipients with an early warning. 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 conditions. It may be necessary for local councils to activate heat plans in the absence of a heat health alert being issued. Council contacts are encouraged to monitor local conditions using the Bureau of Meteorology at: www.bom.gov.au

Further information about the extreme heat and the alert system is available on the Health website at: www2.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/environmental-health/climate-weather-and-public-health/heatwaves-and-extreme-heat

The department produces a range of educational resources that are available at: www2.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/environmental-health/climate-weather-and-public-health/heatwaves-and-extreme-heat/heatwave-community-resources

To receive this publication in an accessible format phone 1300 761 874, using the National Relay Service 13 36 77 if required, or email: extreme.weather@dhhs.vic.gov.au

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