

FAQs: Code Red Response

Allegheny County Department of Human Services
6/18/25

Allegheny County is testing a new Code Red protocol this year. We expect the protocol may change as we iterate and see what works. This document provides a summary of the protocol that we are testing as of 6/18/25.

When will Allegheny County activate a Code Red Heat Advisory?

Code Red activations will be based on the National Weather Service and Centers for Disease Control collaborative [HeatRisk tool](#). The HeatRisk takes into consideration how unusual the heat is for the time of year; the duration of the heat, including both daytime and nighttime temperatures; and if those temperatures pose an elevated risk of heat-related impacts based on CDC data.

Forecasts of a **Category 3 – Red** will trigger an activation of cooling centers and other protocol, except for that relating to overnight shelter.

A **Category 4 – Magenta**, which indicates “a level of rare and/or long-duration extreme heat with little to no overnight relief,” will trigger an assessment and possible additional activation of expanded overnight shelter for people experiencing homelessness.

Category	Risk of Heat-Related Impacts
Green 0	Little to no risk from expected heat.
Yellow 1	Minor - This level of heat affects primarily those individuals extremely sensitive to heat, especially when outdoors without effective cooling and/or adequate hydration.
Orange 2	Moderate - This level of heat affects most individuals sensitive to heat, especially those without effective cooling and/or adequate hydration. Impacts possible in some health systems and in heat-sensitive industries.
Red 3	Major - This level of heat affects anyone without effective cooling and/or adequate hydration. Impacts likely in some health systems, heat-sensitive industries and infrastructure.
Magenta 4	Extreme - This level of rare and/or long-duration extreme heat with little to no overnight relief affects anyone without effective cooling and/or adequate hydration. Impacts likely in most health systems, heat-sensitive industries and infrastructure.

Forecasts of a **Category 2 – Orange** will prompt the County to schedule a coordination call to determine whether an activation will occur.

What happens when the County activates a Code Red?

When Code Red is activated, DHS will:

- Notify staff, providers, and residents through text alerts, online resources (website/email/social), signage, and in-person visits.
- Activate teams to check on vulnerable individuals, including older adults, children, and people experiencing homelessness.
- Offer cooling centers through our Senior Center network.
- Support shelters for people experiencing homelessness with extended hours.
- Work in partnership with emergency services and municipal governments to offer coordinated, countywide support.

What’s new this year?

Largely, these are not new services—DHS has supported residents during heat emergencies for years.

However, two key expansions include:

- (1) Senior Centers acting as cooling centers will extend hours more systematically on Code Red days to give residents more access to relief and safety throughout the County;
- (2) Allegheny County will assess the need to expand shelter support for people staying outside during extreme heat with little to no overnight relief.

Where can I get Code Red information?

You can find information on the DHS website, or by calling 211 or 311, Allegheny Link at 866-730-2368, or SeniorLine at 412-350-5460.

How You Can Help

Check on neighbors, family members, and friends, especially those who are older or medically vulnerable. Encourage anyone without air conditioning to use public cooling centers during heat emergencies.