

Beat the Heat: communication strategies

EPI-WIN — From Data to Action:
Evidence-Based Tools for Heat Stress
Management for Mass Gatherings

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The communication challenge

Heat at mass gatherings is predictable. So is the communication gap.

Mass gatherings concentrate heat risk through:

- Prolonged outdoor exposure, crowd density
- Limited opportunities to rest or cool down
- Limited access to shade, water, and medical services at peak times

Multiple audiences — attendees, workers, organizers, health authorities — each need different information at different moments.

Heat-related illness is largely preventable when people take timely protective actions.

Communication strategy

- Translate technical guidance into clear, practical actions for different audiences: attendees, workers, organizers, health professionals, and governments.
- Deliver timely, audience-specific messages before, during, and after mass gatherings and extreme heat events.
- Maintain a coordinated global campaign across WHO and partner channels throughout June–July 2026.
- Use engaging multimedia content including videos, social media assets, expert clips, and case studies to simplify complex health information.
- Deploy content across multiple channels — digital and social media, on-site physical communications, and formats adapted for low-resource settings — to reach audiences wherever they are.
- Amplify messages through trusted voices including WHO experts, partners, athletes, influencers, and event organizers.
- Promote protective behaviours including hydration, heat illness recognition, sun protection, worker safety, and Heat-Health Action Plans.

A structured approach: six audience pillars

Beat the Heat communication addresses six distinct audiences

1. **General public and policy-makers** — the scale of the threat
2. **High-risk groups** — simple protective steps
3. **Mass gathering attendees** — pre-travel and on-site guidance
4. **General public, staff, and volunteers** — recognizing heat illness
5. **Outdoor workers and employers** — occupational protection
6. **Event organizers and host governments** — Heat-Health Action Plans

Messaging for attendees

Plan ahead before you travel

- Bring a refillable water bottle if permitted. Wear light, breathable clothing and a hat. Pack any regular medicines you need.
- If you are arriving from a cooler climate, allow time for your body to adjust to the local heat before engaging in strenuous activity.
- When you arrive, find the nearest water point, cooling area, and first aid post.
- If a heat warning is issued, follow staff and organiser instructions immediately. Your safety comes first.
- If you feel dizzy, weak, confused, or faint — this is an emergency. Go to first aid immediately.

Recognizing heat illness

Everyone at an event needs to know the signs

Early signs:

- Headache, dizziness, nausea, cramps, or unusual tiredness. If you have symptoms, stop any activity, move to shade or a cooling area, drink water, and seek help if you do not improve.

Danger signs:

- Confusion, collapse, seizures, or not responding normally are danger signs. Treat them as an emergency and call for help immediately.
- See someone struggling in the heat? Don't leave them. Move them to shade and call for help.

Messaging for workers and employers

2.4 billion workers — 70% of the global workforce — are exposed to excessive heat

- At least 3 million people die annually from occupational hazards; excessive heat and sun exposure contribute to many of these deaths and to significant economic losses.
- Employers: provide shade, water, and scheduled rest breaks. Have a Heat-Health Action Plan before summer.
- Give workers clear permission to stop work and notify a supervisor when they feel unwell from heat.
- Use buddy checks during heat. If your buddy is unwell, stop work and seek support.

WHO, ILO, and WMO have developed joint guidance to safeguard workers, particularly those exposed to extreme heat, air pollution, and UV radiation.

Heat-Health Action Plans for event organizers

The right measures at the right time

A Heat-Health Action Plan means the right measures kick in at the right time — protecting everyone at the event before temperatures become dangerous.

- Evidence-based guidance is available from WHO, WMO, and ILO to support HHAP design and implementation.
- Event medical teams, first aid, and emergency services coordinate under the HHAP to triage, respond, and communicate consistently as risk rises.

Every major event in 2026 is an opportunity to protect lives from heat. WHO calls on host governments and event organizers to embed Heat-Health Action Plans — before, during, and after every event.

The 2026 communication toolkit

From messages to assets: what Beat the Heat is producing for 2026

- Beat the Heat overview video (90 sec) — public, policy-makers, partners
- Mass gatherings video for attendees — pre-travel and on-site safety
- Mass gatherings video for organizers — HHAPs in practice
- 6 social media tiles — one per key message pillar
- 6 daily dose expert interview clips — for social and partner channels

The 2026 FIFA World Cup (11 June – 19 July) and the broader sport and event calendar are opportunities to demonstrate HHAPs in practice at global scale.

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Thank you

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