Technical Advisory Council

Item 10: CalHeatScore

May 16, 2025

Introduction

Heat is not just a weather inconvenience – it is a dangerous climate hazard affecting Californians today. As climate change continues and temperatures rise across the state, communities are increasingly feeling the impacts of extreme heat.

The California Communities Extreme Heat Scoring System (CalHeatScore) is built for Californians to raise awareness of extreme heat impacts and to connect communities to locally relevant resources to keep themselves safe. CalHeatScore is a public health tool to help Californians stay informed, ready, and safe when temperatures rise. The purpose of the tool is to reduce heat-related illness and save lives by translating meteorological, weather, and health data into easy-to-understand heat risk alerts.

CalHeatScore was created out of California's Department of Insurance's (CDI) Climate Insurance Workgroup. Assembly Bill No. 2238 (L. Rivas, Chapter 264, Statutes of 2022) required CalEPA to develop a statewide extreme heat ranking system. AB 2238 requires ICARP to disseminate CalHeatScore information to communities and local leaders, and the Governor's Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES) to support ICARP's dissemination and communications campaign. The Department of Public Health (CDPH) provides consultation on CalHeatScore and will support the Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA) to adapt the system for use at locally relevant scales. AB 2238 also required CDI to release a report on the insurance-related costs of extreme heat that was published in the summer of 2024. Together, these partners are working to ensure that CalHeatScore is a system that reflects the real challenges Californians face and provides the information necessary to keep people safe.

Outreach and Communications

The Extreme Heat and Community Resilience staff on the ICARP team are working with OEHHA and CDPH on community engagement and outreach to ensure that local governments, tribes, and community-based organizations are aware of CalHeatScore and consider the various ways the score can be used for individual and institutional decision-making. These agencies will be conducting a variety of in-person public engagements and virtual meetings to be in dialogue about improvements to CalHeatScore and related communications materials.

ICARP has contracted with the LA Regional Collaborative for Climate Change and Sustainability (LARC), along with the Luskin Center for Innovation at UCLA, to create training materials that can be used by state agencies to train local governments, tribes, community-based organizations, and individuals on how to use the warning system.

LARC and the Luskin Center suggested that the AB 2238 CalHeatScore researchers create learning cohorts to inform the creation of the training materials. The purpose of the cohorts is to learn how the score can be used to support specific populations of vulnerable Californians.

Objectives of Cohort Process

LARC and Luskin co-developed the following cohort objectives with OEHHA and ICARP staff:

1. Educate potential users on what the CalHeatScore tool can do, with the goal of providing the best possible training materials.
2. Create space for cohort members to share ideas on how CalHeatScore could be integrated into relevant practices related to extreme heat and public health; receive information from cohort members on how their work practices could inform future applications and development of CalHeatScore.
3. Provide an opportunity for early adopters to communicate the challenges and successes they have experienced when using the tool.
4. Through interaction with cohort members, provide feedback that enhances the CalHeatScore User Guide.

Organization of Cohort Groups

LARC and the Luskin Center suggested organizing cohort groups along the lines of specific vulnerable groups identified in AB 2238. LARC and the Luskin Center are gathering representatives from various institutions who might utilize the CalHeatScore tool to determine when and how to enhance their operations and outreach in service of those vulnerable groups.

Cohort	Vulnerable Audience	Institutional affiliations
1	Tribes and Indigenous People	Tribes, tribal nonprofits
2	Outdoor and Warehouse Workers	Labor Unions, CBOs specializing in work with farm laborers, CBOs who work with undocumented populations, Farm Owners or Cooperatives
3	Elderly People	Public health departments, Medical Institutions, CBOs addressing aging populations, Housing Departments, Department of Aging, Disability Advocacy Groups, Nursing Unions

Cohort Member Participation Expectations

We recommend that this language outlining expectations be included in recruitment communications to potential representatives/members of the cohort groups:

- Cohort members will perform up to three hours of work a month for the CalHeatScore Project which may include the following types of participation:
    - Document review
    - Limited user testing of the CalHeatScore Tool
    - A one-hour, professionally facilitated virtual consultative meeting
    - Responses to surveys sent out by the CalHeatScore project team
    - Maintaining records or notes of CalHeatScore tool use
- Different types of participation will be available in any given month, but involvement is not expected to exceed 24 hours over eight months.
- Cohort members will be expected to participate in at least two and up to five virtual meetings.
- Cohort members are expected to represent their own personal experiences and history working with vulnerable communities; cohort members *as individuals* are not expected to represent the opinions, needs, or experiences of any particular community.
- Cohorts will be developed with the intention of providing a cross-section of California in terms of geography, cultures, and backgrounds, but will not be perfectly representative nor assumed to be a statistically significant sample for quantitative assessment.

Proposed Meeting Schedule

Meetings will be held at lunchtime via Zoom.

Date	Theme	Key Topics and Questions (Draft)
June 2025	Understanding the CalHeatScore Tool	- Why CalHeatScore was developed - Overview of the CalHeatScore tool and its components - What elements of the tool should be highlighted to potential users? - Are there existing plans, strategies, or resources that can be integrated with the tool or promoted to potential users along with the tool itself?
July 2025	Implementing use of the CalHeatScore Tool	- How do Cohort members plan to use the tool? - What are the challenges with tool adoption?

		• What support would help overcome those challenges?
August 2025	Implementing use of the CalHeatScore Tool during heat season	• How have Cohort members used the tool during heat season? • How is the tool useful? • What are some of its shortcomings and how should they be addressed?
October 2025	CalHeatScore reflections	• Reflecting on CalHeatScore use in the context of the previous summer

AB 2238 Webinars

LARC staff will support LCI and OEHHA with the implementation of six virtual webinars to support California communities. The first webinar will include an introduction to CalHeatScore and latter webinars will include early examples of how the score is being used in different contexts. LCI and OEHHA will host the first webinar on Thursday, June 12th and the last LARC supported webinar will be in Spring 2026. ICARP staff and OEHHA will continue webinars are necessary as the tool goes through updates and as staff expands the use of the tool to different audiences.

CalHeatScore Guide

The Luskin Center staff will use learnings from research and the CalHeatScore cohorts to produce a written guide for how to use the AB 2238 heat warning system in California. The guide will include:

a) Summary of research methodology
b) Summary of best practices in warming systems as they relate to heat communications as well as a summary of the role of local partners and trusted messengers
c) Key takeaways from each cohort, presented as a series of supplementary materials as an appendix to the guide.
d) Recommendations for how various types of organizations can utilize the heat warning system. This includes examples of how AB 2238 can be written into local policies and procedures.
e) LARC will develop a "train-the-trainer" model to teach state agency staff on how use the guide with local governments, tribes and community-based organizations.

Outreach Plans

LCI, OEHHA and CDPH will work to support local governments, tribes and community-based organizations with outreach plans that include messaging, examples of how to use the guide, and the types of institutions that should be coordinated with, including hospitals,

schools, employers, and others. This guide and the trainings developed with LARC and the Luskin Center will be critical tools in supporting the use of CalHeatScore across California.

Coordination

Efforts will be made to ensure CalHeatScore is integrated into other extreme heat efforts across the state including the Extreme Heat Action Plan and Extreme Heat and Community Resilience Grant Program. There are already grantees who are excellent fits to begin integrating CalHeatScore into their awareness and response efforts. ICARP staff will be working with CNRA, OEHHA, CDPH and other agencies to ensure that CalHeatScore is integrated into existing work where possible.

CalHeatScore represents a critical opportunity to ensure Californians have the information they need to survive increasing intense heat events. This interagency effort is dedicated to deep community listening and involvement as the tool is shaped by community need over time.

Discussion Questions

- How can the CalHeatScore tool be used to raise awareness of extreme heat impacts throughout the state?
- As LCI considers how to integrate CalHeatScore into heat planning at the state, regional and local levels, who else should we include in this process?
- What recommendations do you have on the best to way to cultivate effective storytelling on the impacts of extreme heat for the purposes of marketing this tool?