



STATEMENT

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Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General
BC Coroners Service

Chief coroner's updated statement on public safety during heat wave

VICTORIA – Lisa Lapointe, chief coroner, has released the following statement about public safety during the heat wave in the province:

“The last five days in British Columbia have seen an unprecedented number of deaths reported to the BC Coroners Service. Between Friday and 1 p.m. today, at least 486 sudden and unexpected deaths have been reported to our agency. This number is preliminary and will increase as coroners enter death reports into our system. The 486 deaths currently entered represent a 195% increase over the approximately 165 deaths that would normally occur in the province over a five-day period.

“While it is too early to say with certainty how many of these deaths are heat related, it is believed likely that the significant increase in deaths reported is attributable to the extreme weather B.C. has experienced and continues to impact many parts of our province.

“Coroners have been working around the clock alongside law enforcement, first responders and others ensuring we are able to respond to the needs of communities as expeditiously and efficiently as possible. Due to the much-greater-than-usual number of reported deaths in some areas, there have been instances where there have been delays in coroners responding to scenes of reported death. We have reallocated resources and are continuing to do everything within our power to minimize wait times. I acknowledge and thank our law enforcement partners for their invaluable assistance throughout this period.

“It is important we do not lose sight of the fact that each reported death is a person with a family and people who cared about them. Once again, I extend my heartfelt condolences to anyone who has lost a loved one during this very difficult time.

“As we continue to experience unusually high temperatures in the province, it is very important that we look out for our family, friends and neighbours – particularly those who live alone. People can be overcome by the effects of extreme heat quickly and may not be aware of the danger. Please arrange regular check-ins with those who live alone, and encourage everyone you know to drink water, stay in the shade as much as possible and visit cooler environments whenever they can. Many communities have opened cooling centres. Malls, libraries and other air-conditioned community spaces can provide essential respite from the effects of severe heat.

“We expect to have an update to these numbers available on Friday, but will have no further information available until that time.”

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