

# 24-06-14 TheBuzz web

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

cooling, people, monsoon, home, issue, tucson, program, homeless, week, donated, roof, pima county, calls, hvac, national weather service, temperatures, mobile homes, year, early, heat

## SPEAKERS

NPR promo--Rachel Martin, Dalton Van Stratten, Christopher Conover, Nicole Cox, Tony Reese, joel Viers, Barbara Rochester

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### C Christopher Conover 00:04

Welcome to The Buzz, I'm Christopher Conover. This week, minimizing the impact of Arizona's intense summer heat. The summer is off to a warm start, the Tucson area hit 100 degrees for the first time May 27, while Yuma crossed that threshold 10 days earlier. What's commonly called the icebreaker day came earlier than normal as National Weather Service data show the normal first triple digit day comes in early June. Across the state's south, some areas have already recorded temperatures approaching 109 degrees and the Phoenix area has already recorded at least four heat related deaths. To get an idea of just how hot this summer will likely be, we begin this week by speaking with Dalton Van Stratten, a meteorologist at the National Weather Service office in Tucson.

### D Dalton Van Stratten 01:03

Actually, it had arrived probably right around normal for the time of year. We start to see temperatures increase in late April early May. And we it's not uncommon to get 100 degree temperatures as early as May. But you know normally as we wrap up into the monsoon, we do see those temperatures creeping up into the 100, 105s. But all in all, I'd say it's here right around the right time. It's just all happening all at once.

### C Christopher Conover 01:37

Yeah, it definitely seemed like this year, it did not have that slow ramp up. We went from, oh, it's lovely to 110.

### D Dalton Van Stratten 01:46

That's it catches people off guard really fast. So that's our reasoning why we've been really persistent with getting these warning messages out for excessive heat.

C Christopher Conover 01:58

So with that excessive heat, is it just the high daytime extreme sun and warmth that pose that health risk? Or do those warm overnight lows also cause issues?

D Dalton Van Stratten 02:10

Um, that's actually a great point. Overnight lows are also a problem. And especially in urban areas, when all that concrete absorbs that daytime solar energy, you can get overnight low temperatures that are also above normal pushing record high minimum temperatures. When your temps stay up at over 70 degrees 80 degrees overnight, then it's that also poses a threat.

C Christopher Conover 02:36

So each year, it seems like we get a week or two that's, you know that just awful 110+ highs in the warmer areas. But usually that means the monsoon is right around the corner, and that's what breaks it. So because we're having these highs right now, does that early heat mean an early monsoon, hopefully?

D Dalton Van Stratten 03:02

Hopefully you you'd like to get that relief from the monsoon. But that isn't always the case, it can be hot and dry, really are the monsoon to start, we need to tap into moisture sources. So the Gulf of Mexico, the Gulf of California, evapotranspiration from plants in northern Mexico, all of that moisture makes its way up in our area. And the way it does that is that the wind pattern shifts. So when that high pressure aloft builds, you get winds that come mainly out of the east and southeast, or even the south, and then that pulls that draws that moisture up. But it's not really until it makes its way to the surface that we see the monsoon really in full swing.

C Christopher Conover 03:50

Well, we'll all keep our fingers crossed and do what we can to help just take water and throw it up in the air right now. Whatever we can do to

D Dalton Van Stratten 03:59

Every little bit.

C Christopher Conover 04:01

Earlier this week, one of our reporters attended the media session that you all held there at the National Weather Service in Tucson. And the story she did for us afterwards said that this year's

monsoon is a hard one to predict. How come it's going to be so hard to predict?

D

Dalton Van Stratten 04:19

So there's there's a couple of different aspects that make this difficult. On the one hand, you have climate models that are leaning drier than normal. Everything is pointing toward not getting as much activity this monsoon season. But based on the wet winter that we had, that was an el nino winter. Monsoon after an el nino winter leans wetter than normal, so that's one factor. The other factor is that wet winters slightly late into a drier monsoon. So that's kind of a conflicting point there. You have, on the one hand, we had an el nino winter, but that winter was also one of our wetter winters, which was helpful for fire season. But that little bit of a transition into the early part of the summer, if it starts giving indications that it's going to be drier than normal, then we start to lose a little bit of hope. But it's not over yet, you know, we still have a long way to go.

C

Christopher Conover 05:18

So going back to the heat with these extreme temperatures, we've been seeing the extreme heat warnings we've been seeing. Is there any advice for what people should be doing day or night since some of those overnight temps have been up? Is there anything that people need to keep in mind?

D

Dalton Van Stratten 05:38

hydration is really important. Also, just wearing loose fitting clothing, avoid the excessive heat part of the day. So typically, once you're into the 105s and 110s kind of want to be done being outside around 10am. After that you have a greater risk of heat exposure. And then after, I'd say probably 6pm, is probably when it starts to cool off a bit, or at least the direct sunlight isn't as much of a problem. Wear sunscreen, make sure to check your cars. Look in the backseat to make sure that you know you don't have any passengers, pets, things like that. So make sure you're looking out for one another. Know the signs for heat exhaustion and heat stroke. Having those symptoms, then it's a medical emergency and heat related illnesses tend to really be an issue this time of year.

C

Christopher Conover 06:34

That was Dalton Vance Stratton of the National Weather Service office in Tucson. So what are people doing to keep Arizonans safe in extreme heat? One common method is cooling centers, places that are open to the public and are kept cool to give refuge to those who either don't have a home or lack the ability to cool their home enough to stay safe. One group taking part in those efforts is the Crossroads Mission in Yuma. It hosts two cooling centers. To learn what those centers are like we spoke with Barbara Rochester, the mission's community affairs director.

B

Barbara Rochester 07:12

**B** Barbara Rochester 07:15

Well, we have, Crossroads Mission has two cooling centers. One location is at our thrift store, so when you walk in, we have cold water there. recliners where you can sit and rest, we try and have some snack foods there all the time, but sometimes we run out. So we have Gatorade and water there at that location. Now at the location at 944 South Arizona Avenue is completely different. This is the station where we have meals and housing. So at this location, when they come in, they come to the cooling station, cool down, we have games, we do your laundry, we go ahead and make sure everybody's comfortable. We have activities like Scrabble or Monopoly for them, and we have a big screen TV, where they can sit and cool down. If they need to stay here, they're welcome to stay here overnight. And we have 20 days in and 10 days out. So they get to stay here for 20 days. So we really try and watch the temperatures because we're not gonna let you go out when the temperatures supposed to be hitting this week of 102-111. So we try and do a whole package deal. So we don't say Okay, your time's up, you can leave.

**C** Christopher Conover 08:37

It sounds like especially will obviously the storefront one, but also the other one. When people hear cooling centers. You don't need a light jacket, but at some place to come in get cool, either temporarily or longer term, as you were saying.

**B** Barbara Rochester 08:52

Yes. So I work here at the mission. And we have a family shelter, a Drug and Alcohol Treatment Center. And we have the men's shelter here. And if we talk to them while they're here, and they're homeless, we offer free GED classes here. If we can encourage them. It's an encouragement for them to be here, then we can find out why you're homeless, what's going on in your life. I have counselors here to see if there's anything we can do to get you off the street for being homeless. Do you need to go to the doctor? I have bus passes. We provide as much as we possibly can. If you don't have an ID, we provide IDs for you free. We're trying to get your life off the streets and into society again. If you have hardships, we want to see if we can help you overcome those hardships. Well, and you said something interesting in there if you're homeless, so you don't have to be homeless to use the cooling center. Necessarily, you just need to get out of the heat. Get anybody off the street, if you're just going by your air conditioner doesn't work in your car. Come on in. You know, you do not have to be homeless. It's open to the public.

**C** Christopher Conover 10:12

We noticed on the website that one of your centers is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Now that may strike some people as odd that at three o'clock in the morning or four o'clock in the morning you need somewhere cool is Yuma like Phoenix and that even though the sun goes down, it still can be very hot overnight.

**B** Barbara Rochester 10:35

Yes. we will not turn you away. This is the place where I work is called the men's shelter. And

you'll come in and we'll take care of you we are never closed, we're open 24 hours a day all holidays. And we also provide hot meals, breakfast, lunch, and dinner three times a day, we do 450 meals a day. So I'm the person that makes sure that we have plenty of food, plenty of laundry to wash your clothes, we do 80 loads of wash a day. So we're doing everybody's clothes we tag them, put them in the washing machine, wash them dry them, and we handed back to you. And we give you new sets of clothes, shoes, underwear, if you're needing them. That's what we get from the thrift store. We keep some clothes here all different sizes. So when you come in and you want to do your laundry, we have a clean set of clothes for you. We have shampoo, razors, deodorant, we have everything here at this location. It makes you feel good. It makes us feel good, because that's our job. And we want to see what we can do to help you.

**C** Christopher Conover 11:44

Southern Arizona last week had its first excessive heat warnings of the year. We're going to have more of those excessive heat warnings this week. I know that's when you all will get busy. But how long through a year do you all end up staying open with the cooling center part of the mission?

**B** Barbara Rochester 12:03

We're open all the time, it doesn't matter, we're open, here's no date set. We're here. We're here to help. I've done several water drives, I've got over 20 pallets of water donated. I have a warehouse, we have them at the pallets at the thrift store and here, we keep on ice. Also ReadyIce donated some bags of ice. So if you're traveling, or you're in a tent, we can give you a bag of ice to help cool you down until you make that decision, I'm tired of living like this. Let's see if I couldn't get out of this situation.

**C** Christopher Conover 12:44

Can folks bring their pets in? A lot of the folks who are homeless have pets can they come in also?

**B** Barbara Rochester 12:51

We can't because of my insurance. But we have a shade outside. It's all shaded and there's cold water and snacks there. They can tie their dog there and somebody could watch it if they want to come in. But that is the only thing I cannot allow. And we have people from the Humane Society, other people with different organizations that will take care of their pets while they're here at the mission. So we want to hope that things do work because 99.9 will not give up their pants for nothing. It doesn't matter their living conditions. So we have dog food here. We have Ziploc bags, and we give out dog food and water bottles for the dogs because they have to drink too. We try not to say no. So but the only thing is, you know, we watch the dogs and they're very careful about their dogs. They keep them on leashes, and it's across the street. The cooling station. Yes. So the dogs can run around and have a good time.

**C** Christopher Conover 13:52  
What made your organization decide to get into this, especially the cooling station part of this?

**B** Barbara Rochester 13:58  
We've been doing this for a long time, like 20 years. We've always provided this. It's just that we're doing more publicity on it, because we saw the need was there. And the need is there. That's our job is to take care of the situation.

**C** Christopher Conover 14:15  
All right. Well, thanks for spending some time with us.

**B** Barbara Rochester 14:18  
You're welcome. If there's anything else any questions. We're always asking for donations, food, water, Gatorade, and the luxury is root beer floats. They love root beer floats. So I like to say you know, Cold Stone Creamery donates ice cream periodically. So we get those cans of rootbeer and give them a big 16 ounce ice cream and they just pour that root beer and and that's heaven on earth.

**C** Christopher Conover 14:47  
That was Barbara Rochester with the Crossroads mission in Yuma. You weren't listening to The Buzz. After the break. We learn about a program that helps people fix cooling issues for free. Stay with us. Hi,

**N** NPR promo--Rachel Martin 15:01  
I'm Rachel Martin. You probably know how to interview podcasts with famous people usually go. There's a host, a guest and a light q&a. But on Wildcard we have ripped up the typical script. It's a new podcast from NPR, where I invite actors, artists and comedians to play a game using a special deck of cards to talk about some of life's biggest questions. Listen to Wildcard wherever you get your podcast only from NPR.

**C** Christopher Conover 15:25  
Welcome back to The Buzz. I'm Christopher Conover. We're looking at efforts to mitigate heat caused health issues this week. In Pima County, the Home Repair Assistance Program helps homeowners who meet income requirements with repairs ranging from window screens to new air conditioners and roofs. To learn about the program we spoke with Pima County's Joel Viers and Tony Reese. Viers begins by telling us much of their work includes helping people call their homes.

J joel Viers 15:57

That's a huge issue. And it's not just, you know, within city limits, or any specific area, we get calls from all over every day throughout the county. And it's it's a huge issue. And unfortunately, these things often happen kind of too late, you know, they're calling when already they've had problems with the AC or it's gone out or utility payments is also another issue that we deal with, we do have some utility assistance, it's a different division. But yeah, they're kind of a lot of people are really stuck to they don't have the resources to deal with a failed major component or increasing energy bills. And they're only set to go higher of course, this is going to be increasing year to year.

C Christopher Conover 16:38

So somebody gets in touch with the office and says my cooling bill was going through the roof, my electric that was going through the roof, or worst case scenario, my HVAC has failed. What's turnaround time, you know, we're an instant gratification world, we want it yesterday before we called, but what's the reality on this?

J joel Viers 17:04

Sure. And unfortunately, our program is simply not structured, we're not nimble enough. And our grant funders don't allow sort of the flexibility yet to do an emergency sort of program. Turnaround varies depending again, on how we prioritize folks, if it is really a health safety issue, there's a small child, there's an elderly person, disabled something, then we can we have the option because our policy is, basically our policy, we can move them up as we need to and put off, you know, other less less critical needs. Just for a little background on the intake process, because you mentioned utility assistance that's handled through another phone number and another division in our department. So typically, those are completely separate things, they may coincide once we start work or you know, if they start getting utility assistance, somebody will discover well, your it's your your HVAC is creating these \$400 bills, or it's about to die. So on the utility end, somebody else will handle that if they call in directly to the home repair line, Myra will take the call and try to number one, we'll figure out whether in the city Tucson or not, because we get tons of calls. And people don't know exactly what jurisdiction they're in. So she determines whether they're in the city or not. If they're not, then there's a couple of quick questions, she will direct them to the website, which is kind of though the only intake portal we have now. We do have paper applications and they can go out Myra will even take them out to folks and help them fill them out, which is fantastic. You know, she gets a lot of kudos for that, and the clients are super happy. But once that happens, they will go through an eligibility screening. So we'll look at their income. There's lots of documentation because we're the government. And if it was up to us, you know, we get rid of all that. But that's all required by DOE and other folks will do that. And then they'll go into a file and we'll prioritize them, we'll assign a program emphasis area, like do they need roof, whatever. Myra will set up the files, Tony gets them and then he'll kind of parse them out to the home repair specialists to then go make the initial assessment. And that whole process typically takes, I think we've gotten a little better what it's about 14 months now. I mean, that's fairly substantial if you're waiting for your roof to be replaced or something. But in the absence of other resources, and the fact that this is totally free to them, you kind of gotta hang in there.



19:19

Right, and as you said, you can change priorities. If somebody's, since we're talking HVAC, HVAC goes out, and it's summer, and we're going to be in the 110s. You can prioritize that over another issue that somebody else maybe has been waiting for, but it's not a safety or health issue.



joel Viers 19:42

Absolutely. And you'll see like in monsoon season, we'll end up rolling a couple of roofs up a little up the ladder a bit because that becomes an issue or if we have a complete roof collapse and that's significant.



Tony Reese 19:53

And one of the great things about with our program is we do have some portable AC units that we can lend out to the residents until we can get their application completed, get them in, in the program. And you'll get our contractors out there. So we do have a little bit of a remedy to help them out. And it only calls a room, but we usually put it in their bedroom, that's where they're going to be spending most of that time anyway, so,



Christopher Conover 20:15

and one room is better than no room



Tony Reese 20:17

Exactly.



joel Viers 20:17

And a couple of things about those units. Thanks for bringing that up. We got TEP and Trico to donate them. So they each donated five, we've approached Lowe's as a test, just to see if they would donate some. I don't think that's gone anywhere for a little bit. But we will reach out again, and we do get calls from people who don't qualify for the program, but have no AC. In other words, they have enough money to actually replace it. But there's lead time they got to do it, we will take a portable out to them too.



Christopher Conover 20:46

So what can be done to keep a home cool beyond replacing a swamp cooler or an air conditioner that's starting to die? Are there other things that you all can do? Or can help people



do before you get to that crisis phase?

**T** Tony Reese 21:07

Yeah, so one of the things that when when we go into a home, we do our initial inspection, so we'll check the insulation in the attic, make sure it's adequate, weather stripping, we do sunscreens to help prevent, you know, prevent the sunlight coming directly through the windows, just minor things like that will definitely increase their their cooling capacity and reduce their bills.

**C** Christopher Conover 21:31

Of course, because it's Arizona, we don't have a lot of humidity shade works here as opposed to places where the humidity where shades just dark.

**T** Tony Reese 21:39

Yeah.

**J** joel Viers 21:40

And once that contractors get on site to they may have some other ideas or some options that we can actually pay for. And we're kind of playing with the idea, we have a new small, very small source of funds, where we might be able to do some a little more innovative things in terms of weatherization. But we don't don't really do a whole lot of significant weatherization, we try to do what we can and get people safe, and then go on to the sort of the next needy client. For instance, when we do mobile home roofs, when we do replace those, those always get insulation in the ceiling. And we work on a lot of really old mobile homes. And there's nothing in there, essentially. So any roof replaced, you get a minimum of two, two and a half inches of insulation in there plus, you know, Windows ceilings and things like that.

**C** Christopher Conover 22:28

Which not only keeps it cooler, should keep those bills down also, because you're not air conditioning the yard at that point.

**J** joel Viers 22:35

That's right. And at this point, it means they're increasing not geometrically any longer. They're just increasing arithmetically. Right,

**C** Christopher Conover 22:42

exactly, exactly as we get up into the triple digits as we're starting to do now. So you've talked a couple of times about people who qualify people who don't qualify. In a nutshell, who qualifies for these programs,

**J** joel Viers 22:57

it's mainly income based. So our funding streams mandate that people be of low or moderate income, which means here 80% or less of area median income. So that would be Tucson is the measure of area median includes the whole county. So whatever is issued as the number by the Census, that becomes the gauge. 80% of that income is where you qualify, at or below. And it depends on family size, there's a chart always, you know. The other main caveat is one we already mentioned, they can't live within the city of Tucson, that's simply we're not being mean, the city has their own funds for that, right? They manage whatever they do. And then we, typically we don't work on rentals, because we get kind of caught between the point of improving a property owner's property rather than the actual home of the the qualifying person, the low income person. I mean, we know a lot of mobile home parks out there aren't owned by poor people, right? So we will work on homes that are owned by the client, but on a rental lot. So in other words, they're paying a space fee. If they actually own the home, if it's titled or it's real property to them. We'll work on it because it's improvements only the home we don't work outside the home.

**T** Tony Reese 24:12

One of the reasons we don't do many rentals is because if it's an HVAC or large equipment that's usually on the the owner of the home, so they're responsible for maintaining the HVAC equipment, refrigerators, stoves, stuff like that.

**C** Christopher Conover 24:28

You've mentioned mobile homes, that may be something people just don't think about. It sounds like a lot of the work you do is on mobile homes, which there are plenty of in Tucson

**J** joel Viers 24:38

Well, all Pima County Yeah, frankly. Yeah, it just ran the numbers and I didn't bring the sheet a couple of weeks ago we do right now 73% of our volume is mobile homes

**C** Christopher Conover 24:48

73% That's a big number.

**J** joel Viers 24:52

And we're working on some, I've even seen 1959 mobile homes, you know, and they're they

weren't built to last that long. So you can imagine the issues they might have. Out of that 73%, and this is extracted from a database of environmental reviews that I have to do on all our projects including our sub recipients, I think about 34% of that 73% are pre '76, when Housing and Urban Development actually stepped in and mandated certain structural construction features and energy efficiency, that's that's when a mobile home became actually a manufactured home, in June of 1976. So anything before that aluminum wire, who knows what you'll find, after that, it's better but we still have that pool of, you know, 34% of 73% that are in potentially really bad shape. And at some point, how much can you do?

**C** Christopher Conover 25:43

Right, there becomes a point where you're completely rebuilding potentially

**J** joel Viers 25:47

Sure. And then your return on investment is totally lopsided.

**C** Christopher Conover 25:51

So we hear a lot of talk about things like rooftop solar and low E double pane windows, doing stuff like that is not cheap. What's the low hanging fruit that people can do to keep those cooling costs down? Yeah,

**T** Tony Reese 26:09

so that's why we do the sunscreens, the sunscreens are a proven measure. They're cost effective. replacing windows is not in our program because there is they're not cost effective in the long run. It takes approximately 30 years to pay off a window.

**J** joel Viers 26:28

That kind of surprised me when I first heard that, I mean, you essentially can't get single pane windows anymore. And they will keep the immediate interior, you know, air cooler, but yeah, as in terms of savings on your energy bill, you're better off putting your money elsewhere. If you have extra money and you have done other things, by all means. Additional insulation if you can do that, so he's good. Make sure your house is sealed properly. AC tuneups, make sure you change your filter that's a that's a really big one that we find. Anybody can get kind of complacent and especially if you pets or something, change it every month. It might be five bucks or something or two months at least two months

**C** Christopher Conover 27:10

And the insulation I know right now if I go up in my attic to get something it's hot and it's thankfully not that hot in the house. So the insulation is a big deal.

**J** joel Viers 27:23

And proper venting to I mean you can't you don't want to make your house absolutely too tight. Right so it's sealed. You've got to have airflow through for safety reasons and health reasons.

**C** Christopher Conover 27:32

That was Pima County's Joel Viers and Tony Reese, and that's The Buzz for this week. You can find all our episodes online at [azpm.org](http://azpm.org) and subscribe to our show wherever you get your podcasts, just search for The Buzz Arizona. We're also on the NPR app. Zac Ziegler is our producer with production help from Deserae Tucker. Our music is by Enter the Haggis, I'm Christopher Conover, thanks for listening.

**N** Nicole Cox 28:13

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