

Cloudy Skies, Clear Messages

Risk Communication Workshop for Community Leaders

Oswego County Health Department

Oswego County Emergency Management



HEALTH DEPARTMENT
OSWEGO COUNTY

Rationale for the Project

- Severe weather events like snowstorms, floods, and extreme temperatures can threaten health and safety. Effective communication about these risks is essential for keeping the community we serve, safe.
- The Oswego County Health Department and Emergency Management Office partnered and conducted a community survey to better understand how residents receive weather alerts, understand the associated risks to health and safety, and act on alerts when issued.



Project Elements

- Community survey on weather alerts and information
- Risk communication toolkit development
- Risk communication workshop: *Cloudy Skies, Clear Messages*



Goals of the survey were to:

- **Identify gaps in awareness and communication**
- **Understand public behaviors**
- **Guide future outreach and education efforts by Oswego County**



Survey distribution

- **Distributed electronic and paper version**
- **Focused on populations at higher risk to the impact of extreme weather:**
 - Senior population
 - Unhoused
 - People who use drugs
 - Lower income
 - Amish
- **110 weather radios distributed as incentives to take the survey**
- **238 people responded to the survey**



Weather Alert Survey



Improving Weather Communication: A Rural Community Snapshot

Review of a community weather alert survey done in Oswego County NY, and providing insights into areas for improved risk communication.

Oswego County Health Department and Oswego County Emergency Management Office
May 29, 2025

<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/698b0209ac6c411389b989b25a2102d5>



Oswego County Weather Alerts Community Survey

This survey is being conducted by the Oswego County Health Department and the Oswego County Emergency Management Office. We want to learn about how Oswego County residents get information about severe weather and how they understand the risks. Your answers will help us improve how we share important weather updates and safety information.

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

What is your age group?

- ☐ Under 18
- ☐ 18-34
- ☐ 35-54
- ☐ 55-74
- ☐ 75 or older

Are you an Oswego County resident? Zip code. _____

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

RECEIVING WEATHER-RELATED RISK INFORMATION

How do you typically receive weather-related risk information?

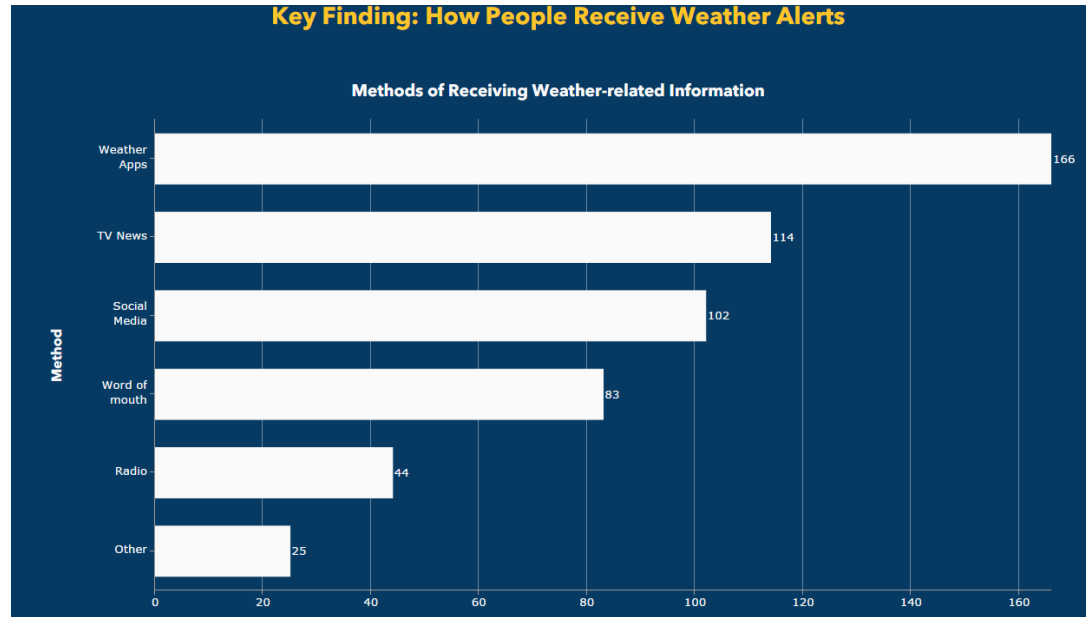
*Select all that apply

- ☐ TV News
- ☐ Radio



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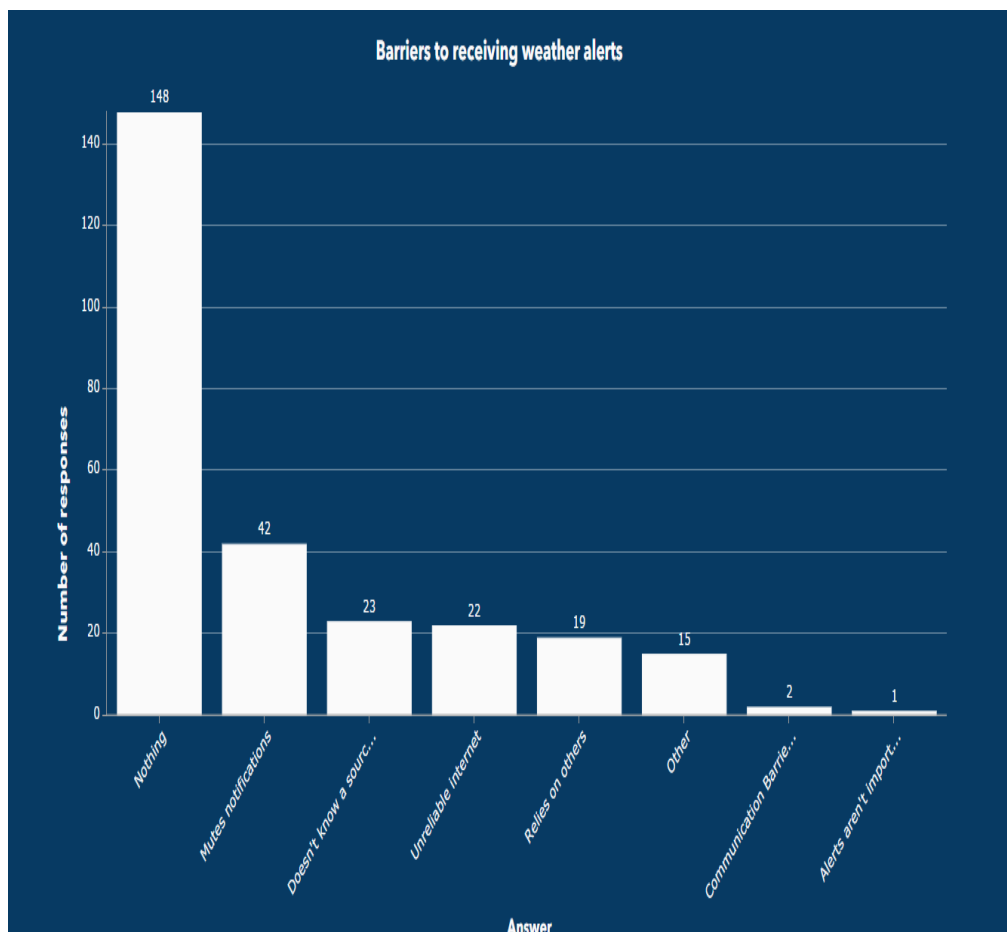
Where do you get alerts?



1. Weather apps
2. TV news
3. Social media
4. Word of mouth

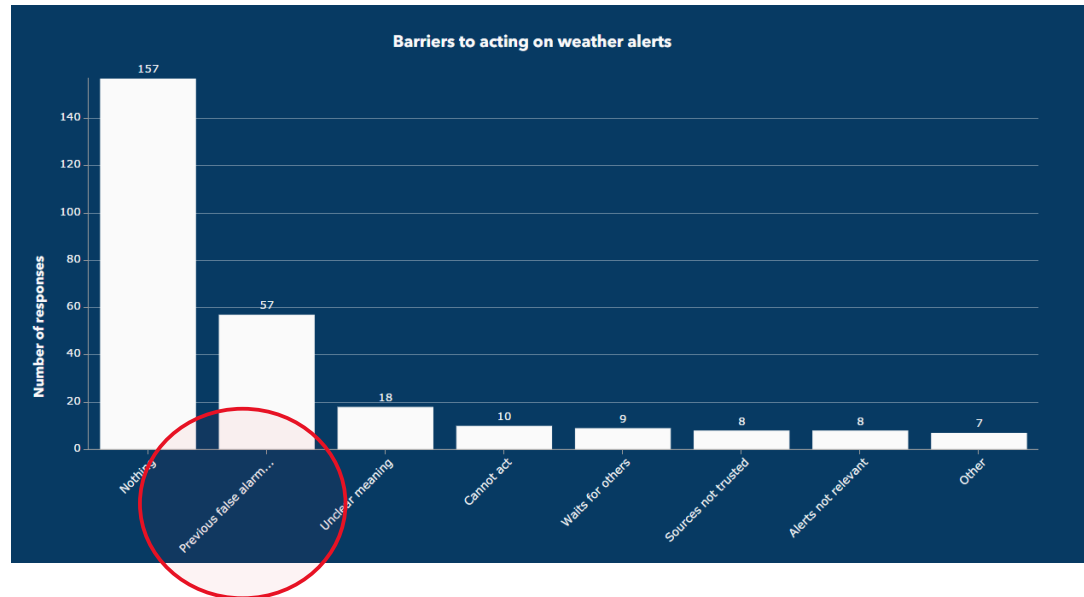


Barriers to receiving weather alerts:



1. None
2. Muted notifications
3. Don't know a source
4. Unreliable internet
5. Rely on others

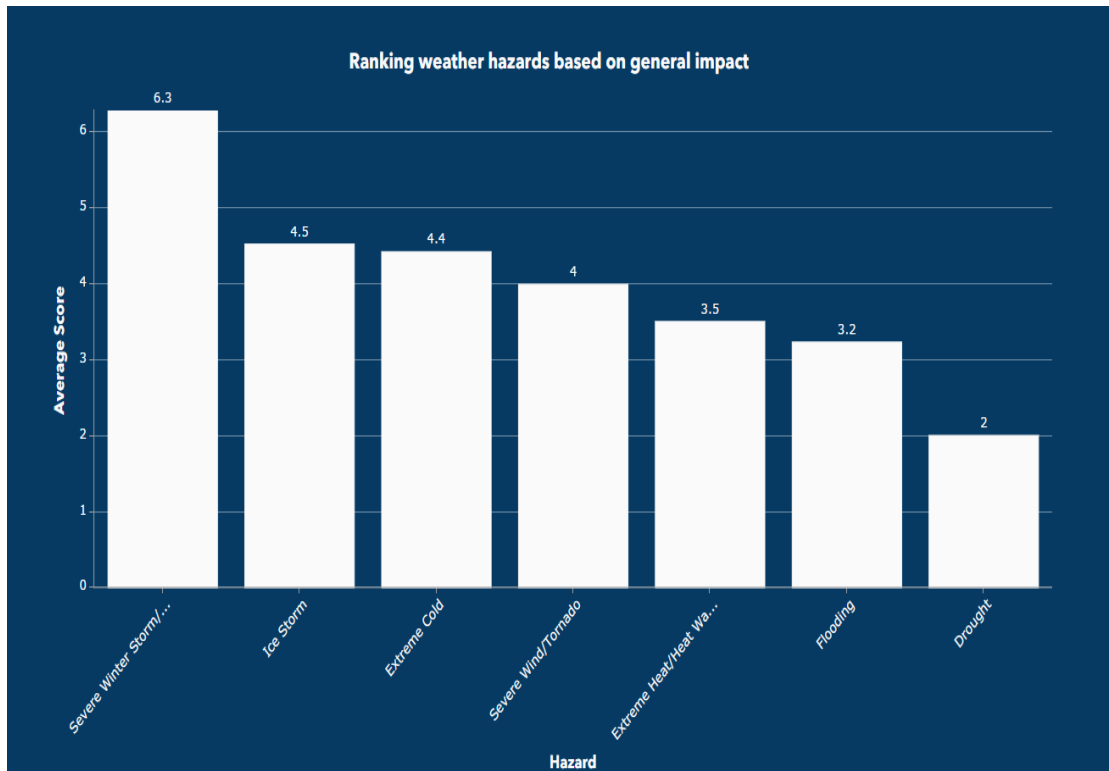
Barriers to acting on alerts:



1. None
2. Previous “false alarms”
3. Unclear meaning
4. Cannot act
5. Waits for others
6. Sources not trusted
7. Alerts not relevant



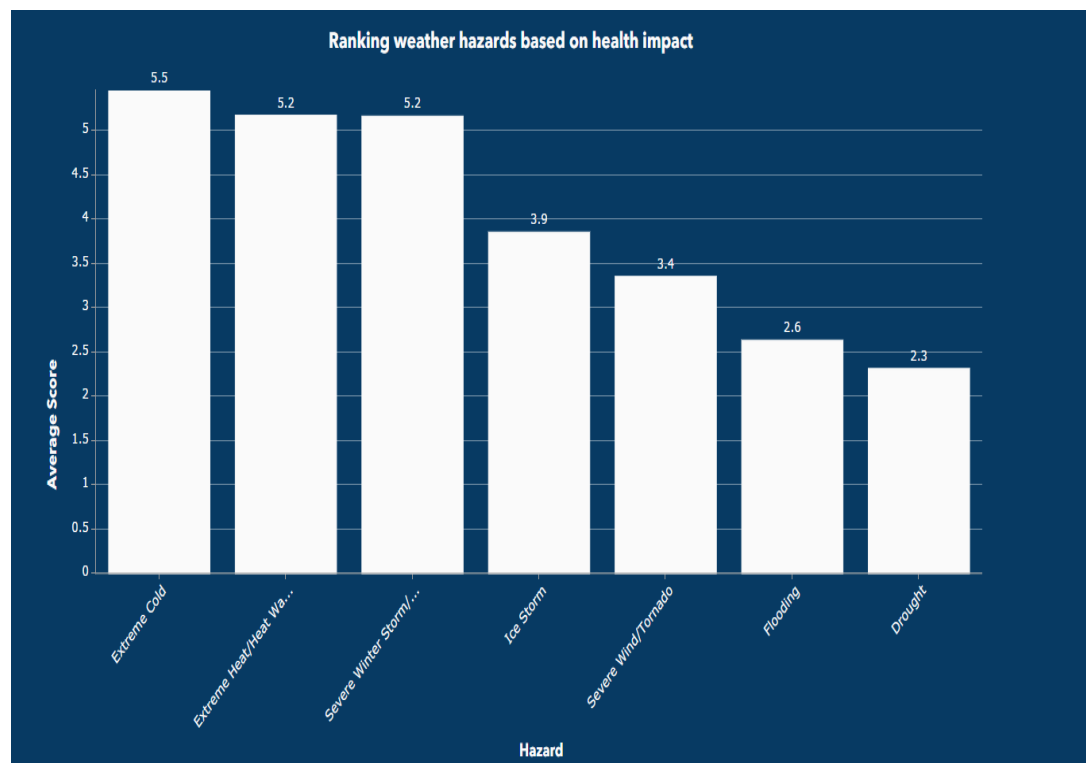
Ranking weather hazards based on general impact:



1. Severe winter storm/lake effect snow
2. Ice storm
3. Extreme cold
4. Severe wind/tornado
5. Extreme heat/heat wave
6. Flooding
7. Drought



Ranking weather hazards based on health impact:

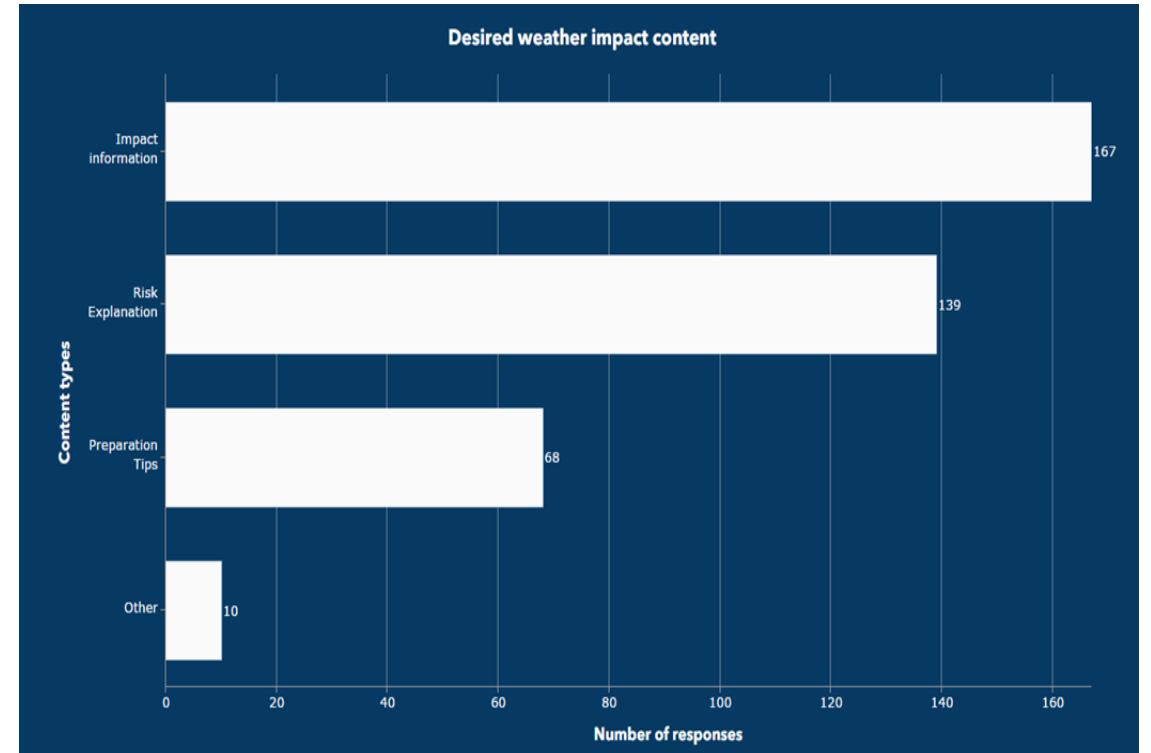


1. Extreme cold
2. Extreme heat/heat wave
3. Severe winter storm
4. Ice storm
5. Severe wind/tornado
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7. Drought



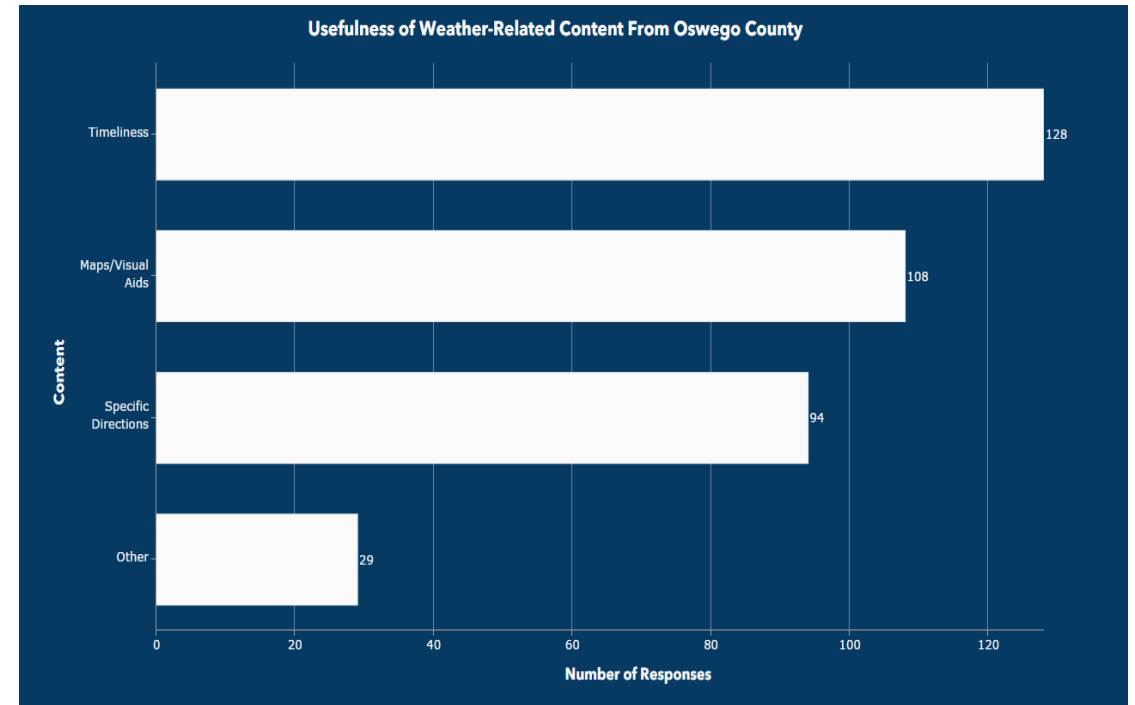
What information do you want?

1. Impact information
2. Risk explanation
3. Preparation tips



What do you like about current messaging?

1. Timeliness
2. Maps/visual aids
3. Specific directions



Cloudy Skies, Clear Messages Workshop

- Held on June 11, 2025
- 38 participants
- Multiple sectors participated
- Toolkit introduced



**CLOUDY SKIES,
CLEAR MESSAGES:**
*EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION ON WEATHER-
RELATED RISKS FOR COMMUNITY LEADERS*

Learn how to effectively communicate weather-related risks. Hear from local experts on weather basics, heat risk and health impacts. Q&A to follow.

**CONSTELLATION
JOINT INFO CTR
10 AIRPORT DRIVE
FULTON, NY 13069**

**WEDNESDAY
JUNE 11, 2025
1 PM - 5 PM
BREAK INCLUDED**

FREE TO REGISTER!

**HEALTH DEPARTMENT
OSWEGO COUNTY**

For more info:
315-349-3382
health.oswegocounty.com

Logos for SWRCC, Oswego County, and other local agencies are displayed at the bottom of the poster.



Workshop Agenda

CLOUDY SKIES, CLEAR MESSAGES: EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION ON WEATHER- RELATED RISKS FOR COMMUNITY LEADERS

Wednesday, June 11th 2025, 1-5 PM

Constellation Joint Information Center (JIC)
10 Airport Drive, Fulton NY 13069

AGENDA

12:30 - 1:00	Registration and Opening Remarks	Oswego County
1:00 - 1:50	Understanding weather basics and recommended protective actions	NY State Weather Risk Communications Center
2:00 - 2:50	Risk Communication best practices (additional focus on heat risk)	Emergency and Risk Communication Testing Lab University at Albany
2:50 - 3:00	Break	
3:00 - 3:50	The connection between severe weather and community health impacts	Oswego County Health Department
4:00 - 4:45	Panel Discussion	All workshop presenters
4:45 - 5:00	Toolkit overview and closing remarks	Oswego County Health Department



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Social Media Toolkit

Related Pages

[Our Role in an
Emergency](#)

[Extreme Weather and
Health](#)

[Cooling Centers](#)

[Warming Centers](#)

[Preparedness Partners](#)

[Volunteer](#)

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Social Media Toolkit For Public Health Communication

Last Update on : Jun 4, 2025 10:15 AM

This toolkit is designed to support our partners in effectively sharing timely, accurate information during weather events and other public health situations. Developed in collaboration with the Oswego County Health Department and the Oswego County Emergency Management Office, this toolkit includes ready-to-use graphics, sample messages and best practices for social media outreach- helping you keep your community informed, safe and prepared.

For specific requests or questions regarding our social media toolkit, please contact us at ochdhealthed@oswegocounty.com.

Search for file name:

SEARCH

Air Quality ▾

7 documents

Cold Weather Safety ▾

16 documents

Emergency Preparedness ▾

5 documents

Hot Weather Safety ▾

31 documents



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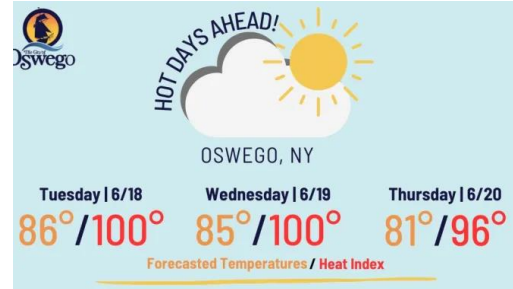
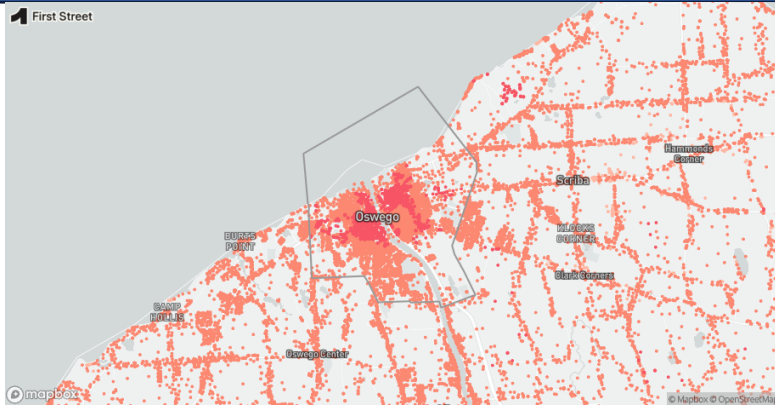
COULD THE EXTREME HEAT AFFECT YOU?

You may be at higher risk for health problems during this heat wave if you:

- ✓ Have heart, lung, kidney, diabetic, or blood pressure problems
- ✓ Are over 65 years old, a child, or pregnant
- ✓ Don't have air conditioning (or can't afford to run it)
- ✓ Work or spend time outside during the heat
- ✓ Don't stay hydrated or take steps to keep cool

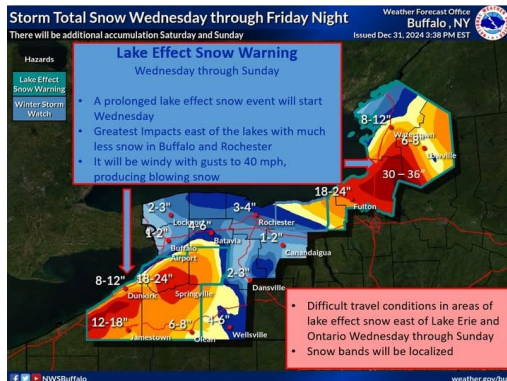


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Air Quality Index	Conditions	Description of Air Quality
Green: 0 to 50	Good	It's a great day to be outside.
Yellow: 51 to 100	Moderate	Air quality is acceptable. However, there may be risk for some people, particularly those who are unusually sensitive to air pollution.
Orange: 101 to 150	Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups	Members of sensitive groups may experience health effects. The general public is less likely to be affected.
Red: 151 to 200	Unhealthy for Everyone	Some members of the general public may experience health effects; members of sensitive groups may experience more serious health effects.
Purple: 201 to 300	Very Unhealthy	Health alert: The risk of health effects is increased for everyone.
Maroon: 301 to 500	Hazardous	Health warning of emergency conditions: everyone is more likely to be affected.

LEARN MORE AT WWW.HEALTH.NY.GOV



Watch

A **“Watch”** (severe thunderstorm, flood, etc.) **means there is a chance of severe weather.**

“Watch” and pay attention to forecasts, and have a plan for if severe weather happens (place to shelter, charged mobile devices, etc.)

Warning

A **“Warning”** (severe thunderstorm, flash flood, etc.) **means severe weather is happening or is going to happen.**

“Warning” means to take action immediately! Seek shelter, make sure you have a way of communicating and receiving updates.

HEAT SAFETY

WHEN WORKING

WHAT TO DO

- Drink cool water every 20 minutes.
- Take regular breaks.
- Take breaks in the shade/where it's cool.
- Monitor for signs of heat illness.
- Wear sunscreen 30 minutes before going outside & reapply every 2 hours.

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10/6/2025

We want messages that help people make decisions...

Source- who is it from

Hazard- what's going to happen

Location- who/where will be affected

Guidance- what can you do to protect yourself/family

Time- when should we act and for how long

Toolkit use

- We placed our toolkit on our webpage
- Mix of “action” messages and educational messages
- Branded and non-branded
- Want community leaders to be able to talk to their constituents
- Your agency is a trusted voice for some constituencies



Lessons Learned

Successes

- Taught us clear “formula” for message creation-best practices
- Survey taught us more about our audiences
- Great day of education for our community partners on weather in general and impacts of climate change on health

Challenges

- Started dialog around other climate issues:
 - Mobile cooling
 - Access to showers for homeless
 - Additional cooling centers
 - Pet friendly cooling centers
 - Clean air centers
 - Safe areas of refuge for homeless

Conclusion

- **Oswego County gained insight as to how residents receive, interpret and act on weather-related alerts.**
- **Highlighted barriers that can delay residents taking protective action, such as limited access to technology or unclear messaging.**
- **Created a forum to continue discussions around severe weather and climate related issues.**
- **Educated community partners on best practices to create messages that residents quickly understand and act on.**

Thank You to Key Partners!

- NYSACHO
- NYS DOH
- Dr. Michael Michaud and Ethan Burwell, NYS Weather Risk Communication Center
- Oswego County Emergency Management
- Oswego County Opportunities
- Oswego County Office of the Aging
- Dr. Micki Olson, SUNY Albany, Emergency and Risk Communication Testing Lab

Thank you!

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