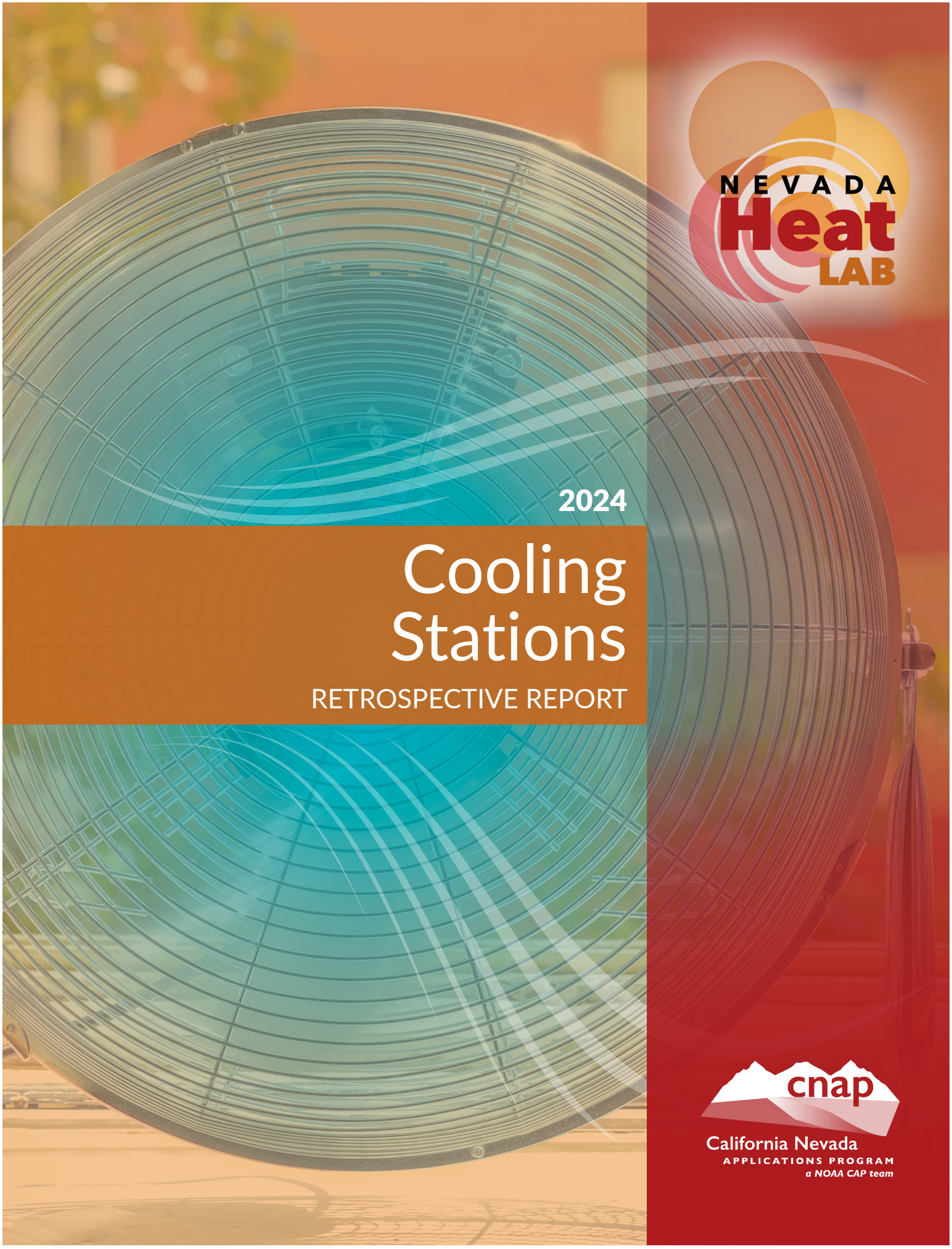


NEVADA Heat LAB

2024

Cooling Stations

RETROSPECTIVE REPORT

cnap
California Nevada
APPLICATIONS PROGRAM
a NOAA CAP team

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

As temperatures intensify, extreme heat has emerged as the deadliest weather-related threat in the United States—and in Southern Nevada, it is becoming both more frequent and more severe. In 2024 alone, Clark County experienced over 500 heat-related deaths, with an unprecedented number of days above 115°F and limited nighttime relief. As Nevada's only official response to extreme heat, public cooling stations have become a critical—though often under-resourced—pillar of heat resilience.

This report reflects a multi-jurisdictional effort led in partnership with local government agencies across Clark County, including both city- and county-level entities. Collaboration with public libraries, municipal offices, and community service departments has been key to collecting and contextualizing this data. This report offers a retrospective analysis of cooling station operations in Clark County during the summer of 2024, based on survey data collected from staff working at designated locations. These surveys captured insights from 58 respondents, the vast majority of whom operated out of public libraries serving dual functions as cooling stations. The findings offer an invaluable, on-the-ground perspective of how these spaces function, who they serve, and what resources they need to better protect local populations.

While cooling stations provide essential refuge, they operate within a broader regional context where extreme heat governance remains fragmented. Currently, there is no centralized authority responsible for heat mitigation in the region. Efforts are often reactive, activated only after National Weather Service warnings, and are constrained by inconsistent funding, uneven infrastructure, and limited public communication. Coordination among agencies remains informal, with cooling response relying heavily on ad hoc partnerships and local initiative.

Given these systemic challenges, the goal of this report is twofold: **1.** to document operational strengths and challenges from summer 2024, and **2.** to provide data-informed guidance for decision-makers and stakeholders preparing for the summer of 2025. By highlighting the lived realities and logistical needs of cooling station staff, we aim to support more adequate, proactive, and sustainable responses to extreme heat across Southern Nevada.

SURVEY OVERVIEW

A total of 70 surveys were initiated, with 58 completed. Of these, 57 respondents reported working at public libraries functioning as cooling stations, while one respondent was based at a community center.

FACILITY AVAILABILITY & ACCESSIBILITY

In addition to regular weekday operations, most cooling stations reported weekend availability: 50 were open on both Saturday and Sunday, six were open only on Saturday, and one only on Sunday. Only a single station reported being closed on weekends. Regarding accessibility, 36 respondents indicated their facilities were fully accessible to individuals with physical disabilities. Three respondents said their facilities were not fully accessible—one required minor improvements, and two required major changes—while another three were unsure. Specific concerns included long walkways and missing ramps, with one staff member noting that people with disabilities may "struggle" to get into the building.

COOLING STATIONS

CAPACITY & INFRASTRUCTURE

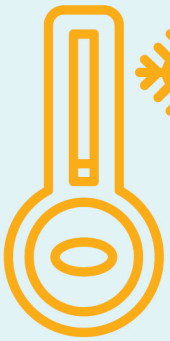
The size and infrastructure of cooling stations varied widely. Ten stations had a capacity for one to 50 individuals, 18 could accommodate between 51 and 200 people, and 14 could hold more than 200 visitors. In terms of seating, two stations had no chairs available, 11 had between one and 24 chairs, 20 had between 25 and 99 chairs, and 11 had over 100 chairs.

10

Had a capacity for 1 to 50 individuals

14

Could hold more than 200 visitors



18

Could accommodate between 51 to 200 people

Nearly all cooling stations used central air conditioning (57), with some also offering shaded outdoor spaces (13) or using fans (7). Despite some locations having large capacity, only 17 stations reported that their typical usage was above 70% of capacity.

Reported visitor duration ranged across the day: six respondents said visitors stayed for 0–2 hours, six said visitors typically stayed 8+ hours (i.e., all day), while two each reported average visit lengths of 3–4 hours and 5–8 hours.

SERVICES & AMENITIES

Cooling stations offered a range of essential services. Among them:

- 24 provided food or snacks
- 21 offered health and human services
- 19 provided resources for people experiencing homelessness
- 6 offered utility bill assistance

Other amenities included:

- Water (10)
- Phone charging stations (6)
- Internet access (7)
- Reading materials (7)
- Places to rest (5)
- General information (4)
- Computer access (6)
- Phone lines (1)
- Games (1)
- Bathrooms (5)
- Programming or events (1)
- Children or teen-focused resources (1)

LETTING PEOPLE KNOW

COMMUNICATION & PUBLIC AWARENESS

Public awareness of cooling station services was most often attributed to local news and television coverage, followed by word of mouth and signage at community centers, bus stops, or shelters.

To advertise their services, 10 stations used window stickers or emblems, seven used outdoor signage, two used multilingual signs, three used fliers, and three used social media or websites. Notably, five stations did not advertise their cooling status at all.

How do you alert the public about your services as a cooling center?

What do you think is the best way(s) to notify people about the locations of cooling centers?

VISITOR NEEDS & MOTIVATIONS

When asked why people chose to visit cooling stations, respondents identified several motivating factors:

- Free access (42 respondents)
- Ability to bring children (32)
- Additional services beyond cooling (33)
- Proximity to public transportation (32)
- Proximity to home/living space (27)
- Proximity to work (9)
- Community interaction opportunities (14)
- Ability to bring pets or animals (10)

One respondent noted that people appreciated being able to stay "without being bothered or told to move on, such as by police."

LANGUAGE ACCESS

Language translation services varied across locations. Three stations had no translation services at all. Thirty provided Spanish-language support, 16 supported other languages, and six used external translation services.

PET POLICIES

Pet policies also varied. Thirty-four stations allowed pets and service animals, while seven did not. Of those that allowed animals, only two allowed all pets without restriction. The rest welcomed only ADA-certified service animals, though most did not verify certification status.

OPERATIONAL CHALLENGES & STAFF NEEDS

When asked if they had turned visitors away, 10 respondents said yes, 23 said no, and 10 were unsure. Reasons for turning people away included:

- Facility being over capacity (two respondents)
- Running out of water (one respondent)
- Behavioral issues such as drug use, theft, not following guidelines, or causing disturbances
- Hygiene-related concerns

One respondent remarked on a seasonal uptick in tensions, noting "a marked uptick in tensions between customers and a shorter fuse on many people" during the summer.

Staffing was another key issue. While 28 respondents said they had enough staff to meet cooling station needs, eight said they needed one more staff member, and six said they needed multiple additional staff.

REQUESTS & RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Visitors requested a variety of improvements, including:

- More seating (4)
- Improved air conditioning or more A/C units (2)
- Sleeping spaces (2)
- Earlier opening hours (1)
- Operation on holidays like July 4 (1)
- Fans (1)
- Water access (1)
- Phone charging access (1)

The most frequently requested resource was bottled water or filtered water filling stations, cited by 12 respondents. Additional recommendations included clearer signage, snacks, refrigeration, more storage for cooling supplies, access to hygiene products, cooling towels, and clearer guidance on what it means to operate as a cooling station. Some respondents also advocated for activating cooling stations at lower temperatures than current thresholds.

CONCLUSION

This retrospective underscores the essential role that cooling stations play during periods of extreme heat. The data reflect both the commitment of frontline staff and the resource constraints that shape their ability to serve. By aggregating their experiences, this report provides grounded recommendations for enhancing service delivery, communication, staffing, and infrastructure.

Moving forward, we urge decision-makers to recognize cooling stations not as passive amenities, but as active components of public health and safety infrastructure—deserving of coordination, investment, and strategic planning ahead of future heat seasons.

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