Canadians pack into cooling centers as heat wave death toll doubles
1 July 2021

The heat has killed scores of residents, with the toll rising "by the hour," police said Tuesday, while meteorologists warned of more extreme temperatures to come.

Among those being mourned was the mother-in-law of infectious diseases expert Tara Moriarty, who said the otherwise healthy senior was afraid to seek respite from the heat because she was only half-vaccinated for Covid-19.

"It's quite devastating," Moriarty said on Twitter. "My partner's healthy mom died of heat stroke in British Columbia (Sunday) night.

The British Columbia Coroners Service reported 486 "sudden deaths" between Friday and Wednesday, compared with 165 normally, while...
Vancouver police said calls for help overwhelmed emergency phone lines.

"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 British Columbia has experienced and continues to impact many parts of our province," the coroner's service said in a statement.

'Alarming' numbers

"We've never experienced anything like this heat in Vancouver," police Sergeant Steve Addison said, "and sadly dozens of people are dying as a result of it."

Meteorologists said the extreme weather is the result of an extreme heat dome above the Pacific Northwest, a normal summer phenomenon—but never this hot or early.

"This particular event is completely consistent with the science of climate change: more intensive heat waves, of a longer duration, more extreme heat, earlier in the season," Terri Lang, meteorologist with Environment Canada, told AFP.

"People in the meteorological community—weather forecasters and climatologists—are all holding our breaths looking at the numbers. They're alarming."

Eastern Canada and the US have posted record temperatures during an extreme heat waves, map showing forecast temperatures to July 1, 2021.

An ambulance is seen during the extreme hot weather in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada.

Vancouver canceled schools for extreme heat for the first time, while firefighters turned their hoses on anyone in need of cooling.

"It's been super hot in our house, we have really had to rely on friends to give us fans," said Ashley Vaughan, walking with her three children as temperatures began to cool slightly Wednesday. "My kids have been miserable; there was a lot of crying because it was so hot."

Peter Lohuaro, 70, was forced to stop cycling because of dangerously high ground-level ozone, prompting public warnings to stay indoors; but he said the heat wave also helped his joints.

"It's unprecedented—I've traveled to hot places like Death Valley (in California) and this was hotter," Lohuaro told AFP at a city cooling center.

"For people who live in apartments without air conditioning or facing south, a lot had to go rent

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