

RISKS OF EXTREME WEATHER ON INDIVIDUALS IN CUSTODY

The [Medical Justice Alliance](#) (MJA) is a non-profit organization of medical professionals that protects the right to medical care for every person incarcerated. We are alarmed by the impact that extreme weather conditions and other natural disasters – such as extreme temperatures, floods, hurricanes, and wildfires – have on the health and safety of people in carceral facilities across the country.



1

As summer temperatures continue to rise, the lack of universal air conditioning and other cooling mechanisms in carceral facilities puts hundreds of thousands of lives at risk. Prolonged exposure to extreme heat can cause dehydration and heat stroke. **People who are incarcerated are more likely to have chronic health conditions that are exacerbated by extreme heat.** Higher temperatures are associated [with higher rates of death in prison](#).



2

Freezing temperatures create health risks for those in carceral facilities without adequate heating systems. **Many facilities around the country have poor heating systems, which has led to suffering and deaths from hypothermia.** This problem is magnified by the increasing numbers of elders who are incarcerated. Older adults cannot regulate their temperature as effectively and are at [higher risk of hypothermia](#).



3

Carceral facilities are often located in floodplains or other geographically-vulnerable areas. **During emergencies, when the general public is forced to evacuate to safety, people in carceral facilities are not always evacuated and are kept in harm's way.** They often lose access to necessary medical treatment during the course of the emergency situation.

TAKE ACTION

Extreme weather conditions and natural disasters are predicted to increase in intensity and frequency. We urge agencies, lawmakers, and prison administrators to enact measures to protect people in carceral facilities. Policies such as temperature reporting, standards for indoor temperatures, and mitigation plans for weather extremes can save lives. MJA experts are available to advise on necessary strategies. We urge the press, advocates, and other stakeholders to raise awareness. Please direct inquiries for expert or public comment to info@medicaljusticealliance.org