



KEY ACTION AREA:

Prepare local businesses

The need

Heat and wildfire smoke disrupt business operations and put workers at risk across the South-Central Puget Sound.⁵⁸ Local partners and community organizations note that some workplaces and community-serving spaces struggle to maintain reliable cooling or high-quality air-filtration systems—an issue echoed in national studies showing that many indoor workplaces are not adequately prepared for extreme heat⁵⁹ or smoke events,⁶⁰ leaving employees and customers exposed during hazardous conditions. These climate hazards also carry significant economic consequences: statewide analyses estimate hundreds of millions of dollars in lost economic activity from heat alone, for example.⁶¹ By elevating businesses as active resilience partners—upgrading their facilities, protecting workers, and supporting community access to clean, safe spaces—regional strategies can boost economic stability while strengthening community well-being during future heat and smoke events.

Action plans for high-priority strategies

The following action plans outline steps to implement selected high-priority strategies and identify key partners and existing efforts to build on.



Pike Place Market in Seattle, Washington



This is an excerpt from the C2ES Regional Action Roadmap for Extreme Heat and Wildfire Smoke, informed from conversations from the South-Central Puget Sound Climate Resilient Communities Accelerator.

Find the full Roadmap here: <https://www.c2es.org/document/puget-sound-action-roadmap>.



HIGH-PRIORITY STRATEGY: Invest in community-based public-private partnerships (CBP3s) that help neighborhoods and businesses work together to prepare for extreme heat and wildfire smoke events.

CBP3s help neighborhoods and businesses jointly prepare for heat and smoke by mobilizing shared resources, strengthening local networks, and creating solutions that benefit both workers and residents. This action plan builds and supports these partnerships by engaging trusted business connectors, expanding access to preparedness information, and co-designing pilot projects that enhance community safety, business continuity, and region-wide resilience to extreme heat and wildfire smoke.

STEPS:

- 1. Conduct a regional business resilience landscape assessment using** state licensing data and local economic development insights to map business type, size, location, heat and smoke vulnerability, and relationship to communities in the South-Central Puget Sound.
- 2. Engage trusted private-sector connectors to increase engagement** by partnering with chambers of commerce, business improvement areas, large employers, and industry coalitions that already convene local employers and frontline businesses.
- 3. Launch a business-focused resilience communication and education campaign** that provides clear information on heat and smoke risks, the business case for investing in resilience solutions, and existing efforts by public and community partners. Tactics could include:
 - developing one-pagers and graphics for local chambers' newsletters
 - hosting short lunch-and-learn webinars
 - codesigning a resilience branding toolkit for businesses
 - synthesizing and highlighting available support resources and case studies from early adopters.
- 4. Host a workshop series** connecting businesses with public and community leaders (including local government, community-based organizations, public-health agencies, and utilities) to codesign partnerships and project pilots. Workshop themes could include:
 - keeping workers safe during heat and smoke days
 - developing business continuity and mutual aid strategies
 - using private or community-facing spaces as cleaner air and cooling spaces
 - funding and technical assistance matchmaking
 - insurance and financing opportunities.
- 5. Advance and support the community-based public-private partnerships and pilot projects** that emerge from the workshop series, helping partners formalize roles, secure resources, and implement resilience actions that deliver shared benefits for both communities and businesses.
- 6. Identify an individual or organization** responsible for building and maintaining open avenues for dialogue between businesses and community organizations beyond the workshop series to identify collaboration opportunities.

ESSENTIAL LEADERS AND PARTNERS:

- **Nonprofit:** business associations, local chambers of commerce, community-based organizations, Washington Chamber of Commerce, community foundations
- **Public:** business improvement areas, local government economic and workforce development departments
- **Private:** banks, large employers, other individual businesses

EXAMPLES AND EXISTING EFFORTS:

- *AT&T and the City of Longmont: Climate Risk and Resilience Portal (ClimRR)*⁶²
- *Corporate Climate Resilience Innovation Stories*⁶³
- *RainCity Partnerships*⁶⁴
- *Floodplains by Design (Bonneville Environmental Foundation and the Washington State Department of Ecology)*⁶⁵



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HIGH-PRIORITY STRATEGY: Support the development of business continuity plans to prepare for the impacts of heat and smoke events.

Preparing businesses for heat and smoke disruptions requires continuity plans that protect workers, maintain operations, and strengthen local economic resilience. This action plan guides businesses in developing those plans by identifying sector-specific needs, expanding access to continuity resources, and supporting hands-on workshops and pilot projects that help companies test, refine, and operationalize strategies for staying resilient during extreme heat and wildfire smoke events.

STEPS:

1. **Survey South-Central Puget Sound businesses on resilience practices** to identify current actions addressing heat and smoke, gaps in preparedness, and support needs for continuity planning. Ensure surveyed businesses include representation from a variety of sectors impacted by heat and smoke (e.g., healthcare, technology, energy, construction and trades, manufacturing, transportation and logistics, education, and tourism), as well as a range of small, medium, and large businesses.
2. **Convene a business focus group on continuity challenges and opportunities** to explore barriers, safety concerns, supply chain risks, and confidentiality considerations related to integrating heat and smoke into business continuity plans.
3. **Synthesize sector-specific findings from the survey and focus group** on South-Central Puget Sound business preparedness for heat and smoke impacts, key barriers, and high-priorities needs related to continuity planning. These findings on sector-, size-, and location-specific barriers and needs should help inform the scope of subsequent steps, which could be narrowed to a few specific sectors or subdivided into steps for different sizes of businesses.
4. **Launch a regional awareness campaign** highlighting the business case for continuity planning for hazards, sharing innovative examples, success stories, and best practices across the region. In preparation, compile resources for continuity planning, drawing on local and national examples and leaders.
5. **Facilitate a hands-on workshop series** that guides businesses through the development of continuity plans that consider heat and smoke, offering tools, templates, and peer-learning opportunities.
6. **Support partnerships to implement pilot projects** that help businesses test and strengthen their continuity plans and resilient operations. Evaluate opportunities for a local organization to provide ongoing support, such as regional-scale technical assistance and/or incentives to motivate and facilitate additional businesses to develop and operationalize continuity plans.

ESSENTIAL LEADERS AND PARTNERS:

- **Nonprofit:** Association for Continuity Professionals (ACP), small business associations, Washington Chamber of Commerce
- **Public:** business improvement areas, research and academic partners, public health experts
- **Private:** local businesses, major employers, private utilities

EXAMPLES AND EXISTING EFFORTS:

- Washington State Department of Commerce's *Early Adopter Incentive Programs for the Clean Building Performance Standards (CBPS)*⁶⁶ (as a model for a voluntary action incentive program)
- *BeforeDuringAfter: Helping Business and Communities Prepare for Disasters*⁶⁷
- New Orleans's *Feed the Second Line*⁶⁸
- AT&T's *Integrating Climate Data into Network Planning*⁶⁹
- Turner Construction's *Heat Studies in Construction*⁷⁰
- Americare's *Climate Resilient Health Clinics*⁷¹
- *Hospital Plans Ahead, Serves the Community Through Power Outage*⁷²