

COMBATING EXTREME HEAT

Arizona is home to the two hottest major cities in the U.S. - Phoenix and Tucson. But Arizona's local governments and communities are being left to respond to extreme heat all on their own. As a leader in Congress committed to combating extreme heat, Rep. Gallego has proposed forward-thinking, comprehensive solutions to help Arizonans stay cool and healthy – even in the summer months.



Rep. Gallego and David Hondula, Director of Heat Response and Mitigation for the City of Phoenix.

The Staggering Impacts of Extreme Heat

Worsening extreme heat isn't just uncomfortable — it's deadly. In Maricopa County alone, **645 Arizonans died from extreme heat-related causes in 2023, a 52% increase over 2022.**¹

As a resident of South Phoenix, Rep. Gallego has seen first-hand how the impacts of extreme heat events are minimized compared to other disasters like wildfire and hurricanes and how they disproportionately impact low-income communities. That is why he's fighting for additional funding and recognition of the severe impacts extreme heat has on the health and well-being of the most vulnerable Arizonans, including seniors, children, and people with underlying health conditions.

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Proposal would create a \$30 million fund to plant trees in areas suffering from heat

Mitigating Extreme Heat

Rep. Gallego's **Excess Urban Heat Mitigation Act** would establish a competitive grant program targeted specifically to urban areas facing disproportionate impacts of extreme heat. States, local governments, tribes, and

nonprofits would no longer be left to handle the impacts of heat on their own and could use these grants to fund projects that combat the causes of excess urban heat or mitigate and manage its impacts.

Some examples are:

- » **Cool roofs**
- » **Urban forestry plans**
- » **Tree planting and maintenance**
- » **Green roofs**
- » **Cooling centers**
- » **Local heat mitigation education efforts**
- » **Cool pavements**
- » **Shade structures**
- » **Transit stop shelters**

In addition to his *Excess Urban Heat Mitigation Act*, Rep. Gallego is leading additional legislative efforts to address the impact of extreme heat, including:

- » Leading the first-ever funding request for the **National Integrated Heat Health Information System**, the federal government's hub for extreme heat response.
- » Co-leading the ***Saving Hazardous and Declining Environments (SHADE) Act*** to create a grant program under the Department of Housing and Urban Development to plant trees in formerly redlined districts and other overburdened communities.
- » Co-leading the ***Preventing Health Emergencies and Temperature-related (HEAT) Illness and Deaths Act*** to address the rising health risks of extreme heat by improving and expanding interagency efforts, providing \$100 million in financial assistance for community projects to reduce exposure to extreme heat, and issuing recommendations for federal action on heat-health issues.
- » Co-sponsoring the ***Asunción Valdivia Heat Illness, Injury, and Fatality Prevention Act*** to direct the Secretary of Labor to create an occupational safety and health standard to protect workers from heat-related injuries and illnesses.

Federal Emergency Efforts

Despite its devastating impact, extreme heat is not currently included as an event that qualifies for major disaster assistance from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). ***This means FEMA can't provide federal assistance to areas facing dangerously high temperatures as it does for other natural disasters.***



Extreme heat is the deadliest natural disaster. FEMA can't treat it like one

This leaves local governments on their own to find resources to fight the extreme heat that burdens their communities— straining local budgets and diverting money from other programs.

Rep. Gallego's **bipartisan *Extreme Heat Emergency Act*** addresses this injustice and would **add extreme heat to the list of qualifying major disaster events FEMA can respond to**. Under the legislation, FEMA could provide aid, including utility assistance, emergency protective measures, cooling centers, infrastructure funding, reimbursement for household air conditioner repairs, forward-looking hazard mitigation funding, and more.



FEMA's current list already includes natural catastrophes such as hurricanes, tornadoes, tsunamis, earthquakes, landslides, snowstorms, and droughts. ***Extreme heat kills more Americans than these catastrophes each year but is not currently covered.*** That is why national organizations, including the *National League of Cities, U.S. Conference of Mayors, and the National Association of Counties*, have all rallied behind Rep. Gallego to pass his Extreme Heat Emergency Act and deliver much-needed relief to Americans suffering from extreme heat.

Endnotes

1 <https://www.nbcnews.com/science/environment/heat-one-arizona-county-played-role-645-deaths-last-year-rcna143274>