

Heat Waves Need FEMA's Help

Alistair Hayden, Cornell University

It is summer in the U.S., and heat waves have started to sweep across the country. These disasters cause at least hundreds of deaths each year—and more deaths annually than hurricanes, tornadoes and floods combined. Heat also causes major infrastructure damage such as train derailments and road buckling. In fact, the Southern/Midwestern drought and heat wave was the costliest (\$14.5 billion) weather event of 2023. Yet no heat event has ever been declared a disaster by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), meaning affected communities do not have access to resources from our nation's disaster agency.

With our climate crisis making heat waves longer or more intense, this must change.