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Caribbean Climate Outlook Warns of Extreme Heatwave Effects for Upcoming Six Months

Public health and economic sectors brace for impact of elevated temperatures across the region

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Outdoor labor will be particularly impacted during the months of elevated temperatures
By. GETTY IMAGES

If the already-elevated temperatures have not convinced you, the recently published heat outlook from the Caribbean Climate Outlook Forum (CariCOF) lays it out explicitly – the region can expect to experience near-record heat levels for the next six months.

Temperatures are higher than usual, CariCOF says, and will only intensify as the peak of the Caribbean heat season (August and September) approaches. The extreme heat will

impact almost all facets of everyday life; indeed, the Caribbean is already experiencing some of the effects of elevated temperatures.

Public health experts can anticipate a “strong increase in mild heat symptoms” as well as a “notable increase in heat illnesses, fainting episodes,” and hospitalizations, according to CariCOF. The agency has also calculated a likely increase in biological risks such as gastrointestinal disease and mosquito borne diseases, notable as some jurisdictions are already grappling with a surge in [cases of dengue](#). The excessive heat could also contribute to an increase in snacking or binge eating, leading to a host of negative health effects. A marked rise in fatigue, irritability, and aggression among the population during prolonged heatwaves can also be expected, CariCOF says.

The sectors of the economy which rely on outdoor labor will be particularly impacted during the months of elevated temperatures. Small and large livestock alike will require increased cooling and ventilation solutions to reduce the risk of heat stress. The growth of chickens may be stunted, and egg production may be suppressed. A reduction in dairy production is also likely, CariCOF predicts. Crops won't be spared the sapping effects of the heat — increased wilting is all but inevitable, and farming productivity will be sharply curtailed between the hours of 10:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m.

The above-average temperatures extend to the water also. Warm oceans will likely fuel [more frequent, more intense hurricanes](#) this season, while CariCOF says the high sea temperatures may reduce the harvests of the region's fishers.

For many visitors to the region, the age-old promise of sun, sea and sand is the main draw. However even here, the high temperatures this year may represent too much of a good thing. Accommodation providers must grapple with increased demand for cooling and refrigeration, which will drive up costs. The region's famed dive sites may suffer increase coral bleaching due to warm ocean temperatures, which can have a devastating and long-lasting impact on the vibrancy of (and thus the demand to see) coral reefs.

Utility companies will have to manage spikes in demand as consumers – household and commercial – struggle to maintain comfortable indoor temperatures. Meanwhile, production might suffer as a result of the reduced efficiency of energy generation, CariCOF speculates. The competing tensions may potentially lead to increases in power interruptions as the temperatures remain high. Water production and delivery will also be challenged as the heat leads to increased evaporation from reservoirs and other collection components at the same time that use by consumers is rising.

CariCOF also warns that the impact on populations will be most severely felt by the most vulnerable demographics. The agency singles out children for comment, noting that the heat effects may significantly reduce students' learning ability when the 2025 school year begins in September. Last year, students on St. Croix [protested inadequate heat mitigation measures](#) that made learning unbearable in some classrooms, prompting the Department of Education to scramble to implement changes to school schedules to shield students from the worst of the daytime temperatures.

Just as last year brought adjustments to the way we live, work and [do business](#) to mitigate the impact of intense heat, CariCOF's recent heat outlook suggests that this may again have to be the case during the Caribbean Hot Season.

