

The Heat Is New. *The Distance Isn't.*

Record summers are arriving in a country of long roads, old houses, well pumps, and elders living alone at the end of them. The fixes are known, most are fundable, and the cheapest one — the check-in web on the last page — costs nothing but the deciding.

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About this briefing. Climate figures are cited to state and federal sources with their dates attached; program details and phone numbers were verified July 6, 2026 and must be re-verified before any reprint — programs move, numbers change. No household, and no person's health, is described here; the patterns are general by design. Community information, not medical or legal advice; the author speaks for himself, not the Tribe.

2024

California's hottest summer on record — state Extreme Heat Action Plan (2026 draft)

4,808

homes weatherized statewide through LIHEAP in FY 2024 — the line is long; get in it early

\$10,000

USDA grant for rural homeowners 62+ to remove health and safety hazards (Sec. 504)

\$0

the cost of the elder check-in web on the last page of this briefing

01 — OVERVIEW

The short version

The intermountain northeast has always demanded self-reliance: hard winters, long distances, one road out of some valleys. What's new is the other end of the thermometer. The ten warmest years in the global record are 2015 through 2024; the summer of 2024 was California's hottest ever measured; and the interagency fire-season outlook for this country — the Modoc Plateau and the Far East of the North Ops region — opened June 2026 flagging snow drought and near-to-above-normal large-fire potential. Heat, smoke, and the power shutoffs that ride with fire weather now stack on top of the old hard winter, and they stack heaviest on the households least able to move: elders alone, old housing, medical equipment that needs the grid, wells that stop at the same moment the air conditioning does.

This briefing does three things: lays out the exposure with sources and dates; maps the programs that already exist to harden a house and a household — with the actual phone numbers; and ends with the one tool no program funds because it

costs nothing: a check-in web, on a single copyable page, so that on the worst day of the year nobody in this country is unaccounted for.

02 — THE EXPOSURE

What's actually changing

The heat. Summer 2024 was the hottest in California's measured history, and July 2025 the third-warmest July in the 175-year global record, per the state's draft Extreme Heat Action Plan update (2026). Worldwide, attribution scientists calculate that a changed climate added roughly 41 dangerous-heat days on average in 2024 alone (World Weather Attribution / Climate Central). High-desert summers that used to break for a week at a time now run hot in longer, deeper spells — and it's the overnight lows that decide whether a body recovers.

The smoke and the fire weather. The interagency Northern Operations outlook issued June 1, 2026 describes snow drought across the region with adequate soil moisture for now — and projects near-to-above-normal large-fire potential heading into summer, with heat-wave behavior the deciding factor. Smoke is a health event for elders and anyone with lungs or heart trouble even when the fire is a county away.

The power. Fire weather brings planned safety shutoffs; storms bring the old kind of outage. Either way, in this country an outage isn't an inconvenience — it's the well pump, the refrigerator holding insulin, the oxygen concentrator, and the swamp cooler, all at once, at the end of a road nobody drives by accident.

And the winter didn't leave. The same houses that overheat in July are the ones that bleed heat in January. One weatherization visit works both seasons — which is why the programs section is the longest part of this briefing.

03 — WHO CARRIES IT

The pattern — no names needed

The load lands where three things overlap: distance, age, and the house itself. An elder living alone twenty minutes past the pavement. A household where the medical equipment — oxygen, CPAP, refrigerated medication, an electric lift — is only as reliable as the line to it. A well that needs a pump that needs the grid. A mobile home or pre-1980 house that was never insulated for either end of the new thermometer. A fixed income that makes a \$400 emergency electric bill a crisis and a generator a fantasy. None of that is anyone's failing; it is the ordinary shape of rural life meeting a new sky. The response has to fit the same shape: house by house, name by name, with the paperwork done before the heat arrives, not during it.

04 — WHAT WORKS

Five moves, in order of cheapness

- **The check-in web — free, and first** — every elder and every medically fragile household gets a named person who calls or knocks — twice a day when heat, smoke, or deep cold is running. No answer twice means someone drives out. The sheet on the last page runs the whole system; copy it, fill it at a kitchen table, done.
- **Sign up before the emergency** — utility Medical Baseline enrollment for any household running medical equipment — more power at the lowest rate; ask the utility what added shutoff notification comes with it, as practices vary; the utility's outage alerts on every phone in the family; and NWS heat and air-quality alerts (weather.gov, or dial 211 for county services).
- **A cool room and a warm room** — one designated, known gathering place per community — it does not need to be new or fancy; it needs to be named, keyed, and on the check-in sheet. Where none exists, the nearest reliably cooled public building is named instead, with a ride plan for whoever can't drive.
- **Harden the house** — weatherization — insulation, sealing, equipment repair — through the free programs in §05. It is the single intervention that works in July and January alike.
- **Backup power by triage** — generators and battery stations go first to medical-equipment households and shared well systems, not evenly to everyone. Grant programs come and go; the tribal environmental or community-services office should be asked, each season, what's open.

05 — THE MONEY

The programs that already exist — with the numbers

LIHEAP — bills, crisis, and weatherization. The federal Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program pays on energy bills, intervenes in shutoff crises, and funds weatherization. In California it runs through the Department of Community Services and Development and local agencies — statewide line 1-866-675-6623. County agencies serving this region (verified July 6, 2026): Modoc County — T.E.A.C.H. Inc., (530) 233-3111; Shasta County — S.H.H.I.P., (530) 378-6900; Siskiyou County — Great Northern Services, (530) 938-4115. Lassen and all other counties: start at the statewide line. In fiscal 2024 the program helped with heating for 69,115 California households and cooling for 28,177 — and weatherized 4,808 homes statewide. That last number is the message: the weatherization line is long. Apply early, apply anyway.

The federal Weatherization Assistance Program. Free home energy work — audit, insulation, sealing, equipment — for households at or below 200% of the poverty line or receiving SSI, with priority for elders, disability, children, and high energy burden. Renters qualify with landlord permission. Same local agencies as above; energy.gov/wap has the map.

USDA Section 504 — the elder repair grant. For very-low-income rural homeowners: repair loans at 1% over 20 years — and for homeowners 62 and older who can't carry a loan, grants to a \$10,000 lifetime limit for removing health and safety hazards: the roof, the wiring, the ramp, the failing plumbing. Loans and grants combine to \$50,000. Local USDA Rural Development office, or rd.usda.gov.

The utility programs. CARE discounts electric bills for income-qualified households (enrollment through the utility); the Energy Savings Assistance program does no-cost weatherization for CARE-eligible homes; Medical Baseline (above) is separate and worth holding even at higher income. All three stack with LIHEAP.

And ask the Tribe. Many tribes administer their own LIHEAP and weatherization dollars as direct federal grantees, and resilience-grant windows open and close year to year. One standing question for tribal Community Services or the environmental office each season: what's open right now, and who's the contact? Log the answer — that's the file doing its quiet work.

06 — TAKE PART

Contacts — verify before circulating

- **LIHEAP statewide** — 1-866-675-6623 · csd.ca.gov · county agencies above
- **USDA Rural Development** — rd.usda.gov → Single Family Housing Repair (Section 504)
- **Utility** — Medical Baseline + outage alerts — enroll through your utility's assistance pages
- **Emergencies & alerts** — NWS at weather.gov · 211 for county services · county Office of Emergency Services for cooling-center openings

Phone numbers and programs were verified July 6, 2026. The publish-day ritual applies to this page hardest of all: dial before every reprint.

07 — IN CLOSING

The oldest technology

Every program in this briefing is worth the paperwork — and none of them will drive down a gravel road at 6 p.m. on a 104-degree Friday to see why an elder

didn't answer. People do that. The check-in web on the next page is the oldest technology this country has: knowing who is where, and going to look. It survived everything else that's been thrown at this community. Fill in the names, tape it by the phone, and the hottest summer on record meets a people already organized against it.

§ — SOURCES

Verified July 6, 2026. Climate figures carry their data windows; programs and numbers change — re-verify at the listed source before any reprint or formal use.

California Natural Resources Agency, draft Extreme Heat Action Plan update (2026) — summer 2024 as California’s hottest on record; July 2025 third-warmest July in the 175-year global record; ten warmest years, 2015–2024 (resources.ca.gov).

Northern Operations (interagency) Monthly/Seasonal Outlook, June 1, 2026 — Modoc Plateau snow drought; near-to-above-normal large-fire potential (gacc.nifc.gov/oncc).

World Weather Attribution / Climate Central, 2024 review — roughly 41 added days of dangerous heat, global average, 2024.

LIHEAP — HHS ACF Office of Community Services (acf.gov/ocs) and the LIHEAP Clearinghouse California profile: FY 2024 households served — heating 69,115, cooling 28,177, crisis 82,377, weatherization 4,808; statewide line 1-866-675-6623; California CSD (csd.ca.gov). County agency contacts via Pacific Power’s California LIHEAP & weatherization contacts page, retrieved July 6, 2026.

U.S. Dept. of Energy, Weatherization Assistance Program (energy.gov) — eligibility at 200% FPL or SSI; priority populations; renter participation.

USDA Rural Development, Section 504 Single Family Housing Repair (rd.usda.gov) — 1% / 20-year loans; grants for homeowners 62+, \$10,000 lifetime; combined assistance to \$50,000.

Utility programs — CARE, Energy Savings Assistance, Medical Baseline: enrollment and terms via the serving utility’s assistance pages (terms vary by utility).

The Elder Check-In Web

One page runs it · copy freely · tape it by the phone

The rules. On heat, smoke, or deep-cold days: check twice — morning and evening. Any other day: once. No answer twice in a row means someone drives out, that day. Write the check, not the business — a mark and a need, never anyone's private matters.

WHO CHECKS	CHECKS ON	PHONE	AM	PM	NEEDS / FOLLOW-UP

Cool room / warm room for this area: _____

Ride if needed: _____