# BESA warns overheating has become a building‑safety emergency after record early‑summer heat



The Building Engineering Services Association (BESA) has warned that overheating is no longer a peripheral comfort problem but a growing building‑safety issue that demands policy attention. According to the original report, the association says the UK’s exceptionally hot, sunny and dry summer—described by the Met Office as among the warmest on record—has coincided with heat‑related mortality in urban areas, underscoring how acute and prolonged heat can turn into a direct threat to life. Imperial College London researchers have estimated several hundred excess deaths in London linked to the June heat, a reminder of the human cost behind the statistics.

Kevin Morrissey, BESA’s technical director, told ProjectScot that this summer’s pattern—less about single, dramatic peaks and more about “much longer and more relentless periods of heat stress”—signals a shift in the baseline climate that buildings must be designed to withstand. The Met Office’s provisional analyses for early summer 2025 show unusually high minimum temperatures and above‑average sunshine across England, with regional rainfall deficits amplifying urban heat stresses; climate scientists warn that such persistent warmth is likely to become more common as the climate changes.

The health implications are stark. Rapid attribution and health‑impact analyses led by researchers at Imperial’s Grantham Institute estimate roughly two to three hundred excess heat‑related deaths in London for the June–July event, with a substantial fraction of that burden attributable to human‑driven warming. Independent modelling published by University College London and others projects a steep rise in annual heat‑related deaths across England and Wales over coming decades unless adaptation is substantially improved; under higher‑warming scenarios and with demographic shifts such as an ageing population, annual fatalities could reach into the thousands by mid‑century. Campaign groups mapping local exposure have identified almost 5,000 English neighbourhoods that already face recurrent heat stress, including many containing care homes and hospitals, highlighting concentrated vulnerability.

BESA is pressing for concrete technical and policy responses. The association argues that a mix of passive measures (shading, insulation combined with ventilation, green infrastructure) and mechanical cooling should be mobilised, and it has urged changes to the UK’s Boiler Upgrade Scheme so that funded heat‑pump installations support both heating and cooling where appropriate. According to reporting by industry outlets, BESA says targeted financial support will be needed to ensure vulnerable households benefit from low‑carbon cooling technologies rather than being left behind by retrofit programmes that have so far prioritised heat loss reduction.

At the same time, professional bodies warn against narrow fixes. The Chartered Institution of Building Services Engineers has long argued that overheating must be treated within building regulations through a holistic, year‑round design approach and robust performance assessment. Their position notes the paradox that greater uptake of mechanical cooling—without careful design and efficiency standards—could conflict with decarbonisation goals, so solutions must combine passive resilience, ventilation strategies and careful system control to protect both health and energy targets.

BESA also highlights a consequence of recent retrofit drives: the widespread fitting of more airtight, fire‑resistant insulation can, unless counterbalanced by improved ventilation or cooling, raise indoor temperatures and humidity and degrade indoor air quality. “Overheating is the most overlooked building safety issue,” Morrissey said in comments to ProjectScot, stressing that measures designed to reduce heat loss and improve fire safety need to be reconciled with the imperative to keep indoor spaces safe in summer heat.

The policy implications are clear and immediate. Campaigners and experts alike call for building standards and retrofit programmes to explicitly include overheating risk assessments, for nature‑based cooling and targeted support in heat‑vulnerable neighbourhoods, and for funding mechanisms to enable low‑carbon cooling for care settings and at‑risk households. BESA’s appeal to revise funding schemes to permit cooling‑capable heat pumps crystallises a wider need: adaptation must sit alongside decarbonisation rather than trailing behind it.

If policymakers are to heed the warnings from the Met Office and multiple research institutions, the next steps should combine regulatory change, targeted investment, and performance‑based retrofit practice so that homes and public buildings are resilient to hotter summers without compromising the UK’s net‑zero ambitions.

### 📌 Reference Map:

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://projectscot.com/2025/08/besa-says-overheating-is-now-a-serious-building-safety-issue/), [[3]](https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/about-us/news-and-media/media-centre/weather-and-climate-news/2025/june-2025-provisional-statistics), [[4]](https://www.imperial.ac.uk/grantham/publications/background-briefings/uk-and-european-heatwave-2025-/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://projectscot.com/2025/08/besa-says-overheating-is-now-a-serious-building-safety-issue/), [[3]](https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/about-us/news-and-media/media-centre/weather-and-climate-news/2025/june-2025-provisional-statistics)
* Paragraph 3 – [[4]](https://www.imperial.ac.uk/grantham/publications/background-briefings/uk-and-european-heatwave-2025-/), [[7]](https://www.ucl.ac.uk/news/2025/jul/annual-heat-related-deaths-projected-increase-significantly-due-climate-and-population), [[5]](https://friendsoftheearth.uk/climate/do-you-live-extreme-heat-hotspot)
* Paragraph 4 – [[2]](https://www.coolingpost.com/uk-news/besa-calls-for-bus-upgrade-to-include-cooling/), [[1]](https://projectscot.com/2025/08/besa-says-overheating-is-now-a-serious-building-safety-issue/)
* Paragraph 5 – [[6]](https://www.cibse.org/policy-insight/position-statements-and-briefings/overheating-position-statement)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://projectscot.com/2025/08/besa-says-overheating-is-now-a-serious-building-safety-issue/), [[5]](https://friendsoftheearth.uk/climate/do-you-live-extreme-heat-hotspot), [[6]](https://www.cibse.org/policy-insight/position-statements-and-briefings/overheating-position-statement)
* Paragraph 7 – [[2]](https://www.coolingpost.com/uk-news/besa-calls-for-bus-upgrade-to-include-cooling/), [[3]](https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/about-us/news-and-media/media-centre/weather-and-climate-news/2025/june-2025-provisional-statistics), [[6]](https://www.cibse.org/policy-insight/position-statements-and-briefings/overheating-position-statement)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://projectscot.com/2025/08/besa-says-overheating-is-now-a-serious-building-safety-issue/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.coolingpost.com/uk-news/besa-calls-for-bus-upgrade-to-include-cooling/> - This Cooling Post article reports the Building Engineering Services Association (BESA) urging policy change to tackle rising summer overheating in UK homes. It quotes BESA technical director Kevin Morrissey calling for the Boiler Upgrade Scheme (BUS) to be revised to support heat pumps that provide both heating and cooling, and for targeted support for vulnerable households. The piece highlights BESA’s concern that long, relentless heat spells are creating an “overheating crisis”, and that improving insulation without adequate ventilation can exacerbate indoor heat, condensation and poor air quality. It also stresses passive and mechanical cooling options and a more holistic retrofit approach.
3. <https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/about-us/news-and-media/media-centre/weather-and-climate-news/2025/june-2025-provisional-statistics> - The Met Office provisional statistics for June 2025 state that England experienced its warmest June on record and that the UK overall recorded one of its warmest Junes since records began in 1884. The briefing describes unusually high minimum temperatures, above-average sunshine particularly in England, and marked regional rainfall deficits with England notably drier than usual. Met Office scientists note the persistence of warmth and warn that such hot spells are expected to become more frequent with climate change. The release situates recent conditions within longer-term trends and explains regional variations in temperature, rainfall and sunshine across the UK.
4. <https://www.imperial.ac.uk/grantham/publications/background-briefings/uk-and-european-heatwave-2025-/> - Imperial College London’s Grantham Institute background briefing on the UK and European 2025 heatwave summarises rapid attribution analyses and health impacts. It reports an estimate that the June–July 2025 heatwave led to around 260 excess heat-related deaths in London, of which a substantial proportion (around 170) are attributed to human-induced climate change. The briefing explains how attribution studies compare observed events with a hypothetical no‑warming counterfactual, showing human influence increased the likelihood and intensity of extreme heat. It also discusses implications for public health, urban adaptation and the urgency of designing buildings and cities to manage escalating heat risks.
5. <https://friendsoftheearth.uk/climate/do-you-live-extreme-heat-hotspot> - Friends of the Earth publishes interactive mapping and analysis identifying England’s neighbourhoods most exposed to extreme heat. Their research finds 4,715 high‑heat neighbourhoods—close to 5,000 areas—that regularly face heat stress, and highlights the disproportionate exposure of care homes, nurseries and hospitals within these zones. The page summarises drivers of vulnerability such as poor housing quality, lack of green space and socio‑demographic factors, and references projections and advisory reports suggesting heat-related deaths in the UK could rise to thousands annually by mid‑century. It calls for nature‑based cooling, improved building standards and targeted support for the most at‑risk communities.
6. <https://www.cibse.org/policy-insight/position-statements-and-briefings/overheating-position-statement> - CIBSE’s overheating position statement argues that overheating is a critical but under‑recognised risk to occupant safety, comfort and health and should be addressed within building regulation. The briefing recommends a holistic, year‑round design approach and performance analysis to assess thermal comfort, notes homes are particularly susceptible due to passive reliance and occupant behaviour, and warns that without regulatory action the uptake of mechanical cooling could undermine energy‑saving efforts. CIBSE highlights the need for combined passive measures, ventilation strategies and careful building design to manage overheating while protecting indoor air quality and minimising energy demand.
7. <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/news/2025/jul/annual-heat-related-deaths-projected-increase-significantly-due-climate-and-population> - UCL’s news release summarises new research, published in PLoS Climate, projecting substantial increases in annual heat‑related deaths in England and Wales over the coming decades. The study incorporates climate scenarios, population ageing and differing adaptation levels, finding that even under optimistic warming and adaptation the annual toll could rise several‑fold, and under high‑warming scenarios deaths might exceed ten thousand per year by mid‑century. The researchers stress that greater adaptation — including improved housing resilience, ventilation, and access to cooling — can markedly reduce mortality, and they call for policy responses that factor in demographic change and urban vulnerability.