SRD extreme heat session:

Heatpumps for seniors.

Remember the impacts, it's important for the victims. And it's important because we have 1000s of daily messages that 'everything is more-or-less' fine. But things are not fine – extreme polluters are hurting and killing people, and, as the UN secretary General says, the window of action is rapidly closing – we are increasingly committing ourselves to very bad scenarios, with possible self-reinforcing feedback loops.

There were ~600 people and of that 70% seniors. This doesn't count cases of serious hyperthermia, which causes brain damage.
According to Sarah Henderson, scientific director of B.C. Centre for Disease Control, the June heat dome was "the most deadly weather event in Canadian history." (as reported by CBC news)

This shook the foundations of the healthcare/emergency medicine system. Call takers were overwhelmed, callers were on hold for hours, even when ambulances and paramedics were available they couldn't be reached and engaged.

So, heatpumps!!
There are supports coming out for home retrofits that are helpful.
Some barriers exist to the deployment of rebates.
1.navigating process – paperwork, contractor coordination, understanding grant documents
2.paying upfront – to qualify, one has to pay upfront for the energy assessment and the retrofits.
3.Many don't qualify -- renters, people who don't live in their home full-time,

We've started with seniors for supporting rebate access.

We learned through surveys, they:
–0have a lack of firewood: 50% had a hard time getting enough.
–190% want heatpumps, and 90% need help with adminstration in some form...
–2and 64% said they'd need help beyond the rebates...

Gov't supports often miss some of the issues on the ground. This rebate program is great, but it's not being taken up as much as it could be for the reasons listed above.

Co-benefits!
We feel that adaptation that also mitigates is the gold-standard in care. We should be looking for as many opportunities to make our support for people also lessen the things that cause the problem. In addition to solving the problem, this is economically efficient -- win-win-win.

But also adaptation cannot succeed without mitigation. We're still putting fuel on the fire, while we're also trying to get safe from the fire... we really need to do both. It's an emergency.

Our research finds that impacts from firewood are roughly 2 tonnes of pollution per cord of firewood. For context, 2 tons/person/year is a reasonable target for a sustainable, fair lifestyle emissions. So if one is burning firewood, then there wouldn't be anything left in the budget for eating, travelling, buying stuff, having healthcare... etc.

Many households burn several cords, we need to eliminate this pollution quickly. Some say that firewood burning is carbon neutral, and technically this is probably true over a long timeframe. But it would take 30-40 years for a new tree to replace the emissions from burning the old tree and we are in the crucial years – pollution emitted now is critical to reduce, and pulling that pollution back out later is not very helpful.

Climate change is here now, and we're barely able to stop making it worse every day by emitting more pollution, so our efforts to adapt must at every possibility also mitigate the problem. Heatpumps are a great example of this. And they save money.

"The battle to keep the 1.5 degree limit alive will be won or lost in this decade.
On our watch.
My friends, right now it is being lost."
-Antonio Guterres, UN secretary general, 2023

Every month, the world burns through 1% of its remaining carbon budget. We are losing very fast right now...

We can't go too fast on reducing our emissions -- it's already too late, too much warming for many impacts, including those who've died from heat.

In addition to reducing emissions, and saving lives – this project serves to change the narrative on climate change from one of sacrifice to one of being more comfortable and saving money -- doing things smarter. And that is possibly one our best strategies for communicating and building the world that we need to build.

Talking about the problem is also often listed as the most important thing we can do. After that, connecting with politicians. Seniors are a large demographic, they vote, they donate to parties – their voice is therefore louder. Connecting our services to the movement to make the future liveable is one of the best ways we can incorporate mitigation into our adaptation and emergency response.

Seniors are also the core of many volunteer organizations. They're experienced and they often have time and resources. Engaging them on this issue is critical.

Also, the scientific literature on levels of climate change concern following a climate-related emergency is interesting. One might think that living through a climate catastrophe would increase our concern, perhaps even motivate us to take some amount of action toward mitigation; but the evidence suggests this is often not the case.
-people need 'normal' more than ever after a disaster
-when people rebuild, they're gambling on the future being better and this leads to 'heightened optimism'
-psychologists note that some people emerge from surviving terrible events with a sense of invulnerability
-hard times bring people together, and being together makes 'awkward, divisive' subjects taboo
-people find value in telling uplifting stories of community resilience.

These are all features of the human mind and western culture that we would do well to know a bit about. As emergency responders and caring community members, we are particularly well suited to break the unwritten code of silence around climate change and transform the instances where climate change touches our lives directly into opportunities to build our team. We need as much support as we can get.

Please feel free to get in touch if you would like to explore some materials you might bring into your work, or if you have any questions, comments, etc.

Thanks,
Max Thaysen
maxtide@protonmail.com