



Climate Risk Mapping Tool: José's Story

Introduction:

This interview features José's responses to an interview about extreme heat conducted in January 2025 and a follow-up conversation conducted in February of the same year, to better understand his experiences with extreme heat and poor air quality.

José has lived in Longmont for over 30 years and has worked in farming most of his life.

What has been your experience with the heat and wildfires over the summer?

Over the last 30 years, I've had experiences with heat while working in the fields from dawn to dusk. I recall that despite drinking a lot of water throughout the day, it was never enough to offset the heat. When I would bend down to harvest the crops, my clothing was not enough to protect against the burning sun. As time progressed, I remember these conditions getting worse. My body felt such relief when I no longer had to work outside in the fields. When I stopped working in the heat, water finally quenched my thirst!

With respect to wildfires, I haven't been directly affected, but I know some people are concerned about the smoke. Whenever I've seen local wildfires, I've seen very large clouds of smoke form and spread over our community and have noticed that it smells like ash. On days when the city is covered in smoke, I've heard people say that they can't breathe well and that their asthma worsens.

How has the heat affected your ability to go outdoors?

Nowadays I only go out when I have gardening and painting projects, need to make repairs to the wooden fence at my house, or am volunteering in the community gardens. I work for short amounts of time, and when I feel that the heat is getting too intense, I go inside the house for relief.

Having air conditioning inside the home is a great relief from the heat, and it's one of the reasons why I don't leave the house on extremely hot days. I remember that when I worked in the fields, we would wet the ground so we could cool off a little. As soon as I was able to buy a swamp cooler, it was a huge improvement. But the day I was able to buy central air conditioning for my house, it was the greatest relief! Purchasing the central air conditioning system is expensive and installing the system costs even more. Thank god I had the money to buy that system!



Do you think the people who live on your street and in your neighborhood are more or less able to handle extreme heat compared to the rest of Longmont?

In my neighborhood there are many older people. When you are an older adult, you can get sick faster and more severely when exposed to heat. I've heard my neighbors complain that it's too hot outside. Before, my neighbors used to spend a lot of afternoons in the shade of the trees. They spent the entire afternoon outside talking and socializing. Now there is no one outside in the afternoons and I think it is due to the heat.

Which of the following neighborhood-level cooling solutions do you think would be effective?

It would be good if they put more options to cool off outside other than trees , because the shade is no longer enough to cool you down. For example, you can put a soil soaking system under shaded benches so that the soaked soil provides cooling. I think the City should also review who and how many seniors live in the entire city of Longmont (not just in my neighborhood) and check who has air conditioning and who does not, so that the city can help those who do not. They are the ones who feel the extreme heat the worst.