



“Helping to maintain a healthy community”

EXTREME HEAT FACT SHEET

WHAT IS EXTREME HEAT

Temperatures that hover 10 degrees or more above the average high temperature for the region and last for several weeks are defined as extreme heat. Humid or muggy conditions, which add to the discomfort of high temperatures, occur when a "dome" of high atmospheric pressure traps hazy, damp air near the ground. Excessively dry and hot conditions can provoke dust storms and low visibility. Droughts occur when a long period passes without substantial rainfall. A heat wave combined with a drought is a very dangerous situation.

BEFORE

- Contact the American Red Cross for information on extreme heat.
- Install window air conditioners snugly.
- Close any floor heat registers nearby.
- Insulate spaces around air conditioners for a tighter fit.
- Use a circulating or box fan to spread the cool air.

Keep heat outside and cool air inside

- Install temporary reflectors, such as aluminum foil covered cardboard, to reflect any heat back outside. Keep the cool air inside by weather-stripping doors and windowsills.
- Consider keeping storm windows up all year. Storm windows can keep the heat of a house in the summer the same way they keep the cold out in the winter.
- Check air-conditioning ducts for proper insulation.

DURING

- Protect windows. Hang shades, draperies, awnings, or louvers on windows that receive morning or afternoon sun. Outdoor awnings or louvers can reduce the heat entering the house by as much as 80 percent. Conserve electricity.
- During periods of extreme heat, people tend to use a lot more power for air conditioning which can lead to a power shortage or outage. Stay indoors as much as possible. If air conditioning is not available, stay on the lowest floor out of the sunshine. Remember that electric fans do not cool, they just blow hot air around.
- Eat well-balanced, light meals.
- Drink plenty of water regularly. Persons who have epilepsy or heart, kidney, or liver disease; are on fluid-restrictive diets; or have a problem with fluid retention should consult a doctor before increasing liquid intake.
- Limit intake of alcoholic beverages. Although beer and alcohol beverages appear to satisfy thirst, they actually cause further body dehydration.
- Dress in loose-fitting clothes that cover as much skin as possible. Lightweight, light-colored clothing that reflects heat and sunlight and helps maintain normal body temperature.
- Protect face and head by wearing a wide-brimmed hat.
- Allow your body to get acclimated to hot temperatures for the first 2 or 3 days of a heat wave.
- Avoid too much sunshine. Sunburn slows the skin's ability to cool itself. Use a sunscreen lotion with a high SPF (sun protection factor) rating.
- Avoid extreme temperature changes. A cool shower immediately after coming in from hot temperatures can result in hypothermia, particularly for elderly and very young people.

- Slow down. Reduce, eliminate, or reschedule strenuous activities. High-risk individuals should stay in cool places. Get plenty of rest to allow your natural "cooling system" to work.
- Take salt tablets only if specified by your physician. Persons on salt-restrictive diets should check with a physician before increasing salt intake.
- Vacuum air conditioner filters weekly during periods of high use.
- Learn the symptoms of heat disorders and know how to give first aid.

During a Drought

- Lower water use. Watering the lawn and washing the car waste water. Whenever possible, re-use water.
- Place a brick or other large, solid object in the flush tank of the toilet to reduce the water used to flush.
- Farmers should contact the county Farm Service Agency for disaster assistance information.

HEAT DISORDERS

Sunburn

- Symptoms: Skin redness and pain, possible swelling, blisters, fever, headaches.
- First Aid: Take a shower, using soap, to remove oils that may block pores preventing the body from cooling naturally. If blisters occur, apply dry, sterile dressings and get medical attention.

Heat Cramps

- Symptoms: Painful spasms usually in leg and abdominal muscles. heavy sweating
- First Aid: Firm pressure on cramping muscles or gentle massage to relieve spasm. Give sips of water. If nausea occurs, discontinue.

Heat Exhaustion

- Symptoms: Heavy sweating, weakness, skin cold, pale and clammy. Weak pulse. Normal temperature possible. Fainting, vomiting
- First Aid: Get victim to lie down in a cool place. Loosen clothing. Apply cool, wet cloths. Fan or move victim to air-conditioned place. Give sips of water. If nausea occurs, discontinue. If vomiting occurs, seek immediate medical attention.

Heat Stroke (Sun Stroke)

- Symptoms: High body temperature (106+). Hot, dry skin. Rapid, strong pulse. Possible unconsciousness. Victim will likely not sweat.
- First Aid: Heat stroke is a severe medical emergency. Call 9-1-1 or emergency medical services or get the victim to a hospital immediately. Delay can be fatal. Move victim to a cooler environment. Try a cool bath or sponging to reduce body temperature. Use extreme caution. Remove clothing. Use fans and/or air conditioners. DO NOT GIVE FLUIDS.

DID YOU KNOW

- In a normal year, approximately 175 Americans die from extreme heat. Young children, elderly people, and those who are sick or overweight are more likely to become victims.
- Because men sweat more than women, men are more susceptible to heat illness because they become more quickly dehydrated.
- Sunburn can significantly slow the skin's ability to release excess heat.
- People living in urban areas may be at a greater risk from the effects of a prolonged heat wave than people living in rural regions because stagnant atmospheric conditions trap pollutants, adding to the effects.