Extreme Heat Fact Sheet

Extreme Heat Emergency Information

Heat kills by pushing the human body beyond its limits. Under normal conditions, the body's internal thermostat produces perspiration that evaporates and cools the body. However, in extreme heat and high humidity, evaporation is slowed, and the body must work extra hard to maintain a normal temperature. Most heat disorders occur because the victim has been overexposed to heat or has over exercised for his or her age and physical condition. Other conditions that can induce heat-related Illnesses include stagnant atmospheric conditions and poor air quality.

Heat cramps are muscular pains and spasms that usually occur in the legs or abdomen caused by exposure to high heat and humidity and loss of fluids and electrolytes. Heat cramps are often an early sign that the body is having trouble with the heat.

The local National Weather Service office does not issue advisories for heat. It may issue "Excessive Heat Watches" and "Excessive Heat Warnings" depending on the time of year and the temperature. The National Weather Service lists the criteria on its website at: http://www.wrh.noaa.gov/vef/heatCriteria.php.

Heat exhaustion typically involves the loss of body fluids through heavy sweating during strenuous exercise or physical labor in high heat and humidity.

Signs of heat exhaustion:

- Cool, moist, pale or flushed skin; heavy sweating; headache; nausea; dizziness; weakness; and exhaustion.

- Move the person to a cooler place. Remove or loosen tight clothing and apply cool, wet cloths or towels to the skin. Fan

the person. If the person is conscious, give small amounts of cool water to drink. Make sure the person drinks slowly. Watch for changes in condition.

- If the person refuses water, vomits or begins to lose consciousness, call 9- 1-1 or the local emergency number. Heat stroke (also known as sunstroke) is a life-threatening condition in which a person's temperature control system stops working and the body is unable to cool itself.

Signs of heat stroke:

- Hot, red skin which may be dry or moist; changes in consciousness; vomiting; and high body temperature.

- Heat stroke is life-threatening. Call 9-1-1 or the local emergency number immediately.

- Move the person to a cooler place. Quickly cool the person's body by giving care as you would for heat exhaustion. If needed, continue rapid cooling by applying ice or cotd packs wrapped in a cloth to the wrists, ankles, groin, neck and armpits.

Heat Tips

Doing too much on a hot day, spending too much time in the sun or staying too long in an overheated place can cause heat-related illnesses. Listed below are important things to remember during the hottest months of the year:

- Stay indoors as much as possible. If air conditioning ta not available, stay on the lowest floor out of the sunshine. Remember that electric fans do not cool; they just blow hot air around.

- Avoid strenuous exercise during the hottest part of the day. High-risk individuals should stay in cool places. Get plenty of rest to allow your natural “cooling system" to work.

- Stay hydrated by drinking plenty of fluids even n you do not feel thirsty. 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

- Eat small, well-balanced meals and eat more often.

- Limit intake of alcoholic beverages. Although beer and alcohol beverages appear to satisfy thirst, they actually cause further body dehydration.

- Wear loose-fitting, lightweight, light-colored clothing. Avoid dark colors because they absorb the sun's rays.

- Protect windows. Hang shades or draperies on windows that receive morning or afternoon sun. Outdoor awnings can reduce the heat entering the house by as much as 80 percent.

- Protect face and head by wearing a wide-brimmed hat.

- 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.

- Postpone outdoor games and activities.

- Vacuum air conditioner filters weekly during periods of high use.
- Learn the symptoms of heat disorders and know how to give first aid.
- Listen to a NOAA Weather Radio for critical updates from the National Weather Service (NWS).
- Never leave children or pets alone In enclosed vehicles.
- Use a buddy system when working in excessive heat.
- Take frequent breaks if you must work outdoors.
- Check on family, friends and neighbors who do not have air conditioning, who spend much of their time alone or who are more likely to be affected by the heat.
- Check on your animals frequently to ensure that they are not suffering from the heat.

Heat Preparedness Tips

Source: American Red Cross

- Listen to local weather forecasts and stay aware of upcoming temperature changes.
- The heat index is the temperature the body feels when the effects of heat and humidity are combined. Exposure to direct sunlight can increase the heat index by as much as 15˚ F.
- Discuss heat safety precautions with members of your household. Have a plan for wherever you spend time - home, work and school-and prepare for the possibility of power outages.
- Check the contents of your emergency preparedness kit in case a power outage occurs.
- Know those in your neighborhood who are elderly, young, sick

or overweight. They are more likely to become victims of excessive heat and may need help.

- If you do not have air conditioning, choose places you could go to for relief from the heat during the warmest part of the day (schools, libraries, theaters, malls).

- Be aware that people living in urban areas may be at greater risk from the effects of a prolonged heat wave than are people living in rural areas.

- Get trained in first aid to learn how to treat heat-related emergencies.

- Ensure that your animals' needs for water and wshade are met.