F A C T S H E E T

Federal Emergency Management Agency

EXTREME HEAT

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. Know the symptoms of heat disorders and overexposure to the sun, and be ready to give first aid treatment.

Contact your local emergency management office or American Red Cross chapter 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 out of a house in the summer the same way they keep the cold out in the winter. Check air-conditioning ducts for proper insulation.

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 alcoholic 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 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 Farmers Home Administration Office 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.

EPI
EMERGENCY PUBLIC INFORMATION

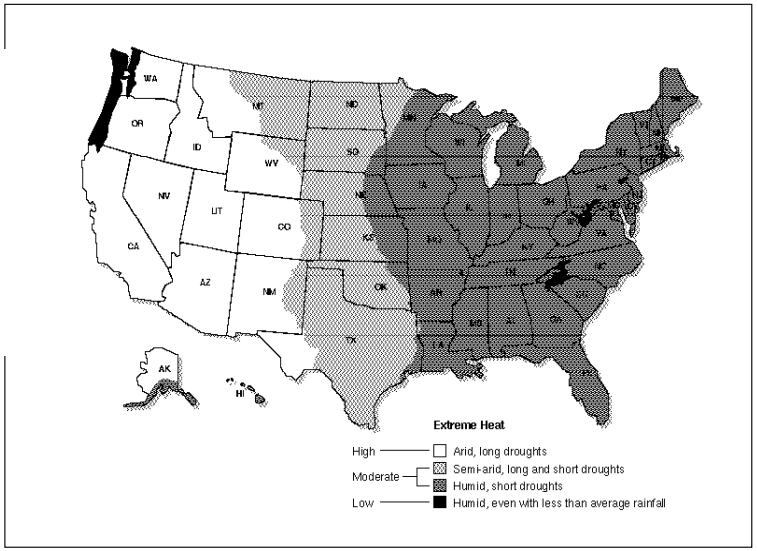
EXTREME HEAT

EMERGENCY INFORMATION

1. 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.

2. Most heat disorders occur because the victim has been overexposed to heat or has overexercised for his or her age and physical condition. Other conditions that can induce heat-related illnesses include stagnant atmospheric conditions and poor air quality.

3. A prolonged drought can have a serious economic impact on a community. Increased demand for water and electricity may result in shortages of resources. Moreover, food shortages may occur if agricultural production is damaged or destroyed by a loss of crops or livestock.



All areas in the United States are at risk of drought at any time of the year. Drought gripped much of the West and Midwest from 1987 to 1991. The Missouri River Basin and California

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 any substantial rainfall. A heat wave combined with a drought is a very dangerous situation.

HELP YOUR COMMUNITY GET READY

The media can raise awareness about extreme heat and drought by providing important information to the community. Here are some suggestions:

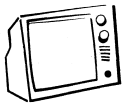
1. Publish a special section with emergency information on extreme heat. Localize the information by including the phone numbers of local emergency services offices, the American Red Cross, and hospitals.

2. Interview local physicians about the dangers of sunburn, heat exhaustion, heat stroke, and other possible conditions caused by excessive heat.

3. During a drought, run a week-long series suggesting ways that individuals can conserve water and energy in their homes and their workplaces.

4. Interview local officials and representatives of the U.S. Department of Agriculture about special steps farmers can take to establish alternative water supplies for their crops.

5. Sponsor a "Helping Your Neighbors" program through your local school system to encourage children to think of those persons who require special assistance such as elderly people, infants or people with disabilities during severe weather conditions.



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.
- Between 1936 and 1975, nearly 20,000 people succumbed to the effects of heat and solar radiation.
- 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 greater risk from the effects of a prolonged heat wave than people living in rural regions. An increased health problem can occur when stagnant atmospheric conditions trap pollutants in urban areas, thus adding contaminated air to excessively hot temperatures.

HOW THE PUBLIC CAN HELP AFTER A DISASTER

When disaster strikes, people everywhere want to help those in need. To ensure that this compassion and generosity are put to good use, the media can highlight these facts:

- Financial aid is an immediate need of disaster victims. Financial contributions should be made through a recognized voluntary organization to help ensure that contributions are put to their intended use.
- Before donating food or clothing, wait for instructions from local officials. Immediately after a disaster, relief workers usually don't have the time or facilities to setup distribution channels, and too often these items go to waste.
- Volunteers should go through a recognized voluntary agency such as the American Red Cross or Salvation Army. They know what is needed and are prepared to deal with the need. Local emergency services officials also coordinate volunteer efforts for helping in disaster.
- Organizations and community groups wishing to donate items should first contact local officials, the American Red Cross, or Salvation Army to find out what is needed and where to send it. Be prepared to deliver the items to one place, tell officials when you'll be there, and provide for transportation, driver, and unloading.