

## Severe Weather Tips: *Extreme Heat*



Heat waves do not happen every year, but coping with above normal temperatures in the summer can be difficult. During a heat wave, temperatures are at least 10 degrees above normal, humidity levels are high, and these conditions last for a number of days. But, even a few days of high heat can take a toll on people and animals. When the temperature rises, keep these tips in mind to deal with the heat. Young children, older persons, and those with certain medical problems will be most affected by extreme heat.

### **Personal Safety Tips:**

- ⚙ Dress for the weather. Wear loose-fitting, lightweight, light-color clothing. Cover as much skin as possible to prevent sunburn and over-warming from direct exposure to sunlight. Wear a wide-brimmed hat to protect and shade your face.
- ⚙ Drink plenty of fluids, especially water. Drink before you feel thirsty to prevent dehydration, and avoid drinks with alcohol or caffeine.
- ⚙ Stay indoors as much as possible. If you do not have air conditioning, the lowest floor of your home out of direct sunlight will be your best choice. Fans can help circulate air, but they are not very effective in reducing heat-related illnesses if the temperature is above 90°F.
- ⚙ For those without air conditioning, try to spend a few hours each day in a building with air conditioning. Use a hot day to make a trip to your public library or community center.
- ⚙ Try to avoid spending time outdoors from mid-morning until mid-afternoon. Exercising or working during the hottest part of the day causes many heat emergencies for people each year.
- ⚙ If you have to be outdoors, especially to work, take frequent breaks. Try to find a shady or cool area to rest. Use rest breaks to replenish fluids. Rest breaks will help your natural “cooling system” work.
- ⚙ NEVER leave children or pets alone in closed vehicles. The temperature inside a closed vehicle can rise above 140°F very quickly.
- ⚙ Be sure your pets have a good supply of cool or shaded water.
- ⚙ Stay out of the sun as much as possible. The sun will heat the inner core of your body, and sunburn slows the skin’s ability to cool itself. If you must be out in the sun, use a sunscreen with a sun-protection factor of 15 or higher.
- ⚙ Watch for the signs of heat exhaustion and heat stroke (see box at right). Remember that heat stroke is life-threatening. Call 9-1-1 or your local emergency number.



#### **Signs of Heat Exhaustion:**

- Cool, moist, pale or flushed skin
- Heavy sweating
- Headache or dizziness
- Nausea or vomiting
- Exhaustion

#### **Signs of Heat Stroke:**

- Hot, red skin
- Rapid, weak pulse
- Changes in consciousness
- Rapid, shallow breathing
- Very high body temperature – as high as 105°F

#### References:

*Talking About Disaster: Guide for Standard Messages.* Produced by the National Disaster Education Coalition, Washington, D.C.

*Are You Ready for a Heat Wave?* Produced by the American Red Cross, National Weather Service and Federal Emergency Management Agency, Washington, D.C.

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For more information, contact your county Extension office or visit the Kentucky Extension Disaster Education Network Web site, Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service, College of Agriculture, University of Kentucky, at [www.wagwx.ca.uky.edu/EDEN](http://www.wagwx.ca.uky.edu/EDEN).

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