



HEAT WAVE

A heat wave is any period of several weeks when temperatures are at least 10 degrees higher than average for the region. Extreme heat can be very dangerous. About 400 people die each year in the United States from heat-related complications, more than from any other natural disaster.

How to Prepare for a Heat Wave

- Stay informed and know heat terminology:
 - **Heat Wave**—An extended period of extreme heat, usually combined with excessive humidity.
 - **Heat Index**—Combines air temperature and relative humidity to express the apparent temperature, or “how hot it feels.”
- Make sure you have a fan or something to circulate air in extreme heat, as many heat-related deaths can be attributed to stagnant atmospheric conditions or poor air quality.

All personnel should maintain a basic level of preparedness for all potential hazards.

You are encouraged to be informed about what might happen, make a family emergency plan, and build an emergency supply kit.

What to Do If There Is a Heat Wave

- Slow down and don't do anything too strenuous.
- Stay inside as much as possible.
- If air conditioning is not available where you are, stay on the lowest level as heat tends to rise or go to a public building with air conditioning.
- If you stay in your home without air conditioning, make sure there is a mechanism such as a fan to circulate the air around you.
- Drink lots of water, even if you don't feel thirsty.
- Avoid alcohol, caffeine, and salt.
- Wear loose, light-colored clothing.
- Be aware that heat waves can bring about power outages and drought.

Heat Emergencies

Keep a lookout for possible heat emergencies:

- **Heat Cramps**—Muscle spasms and aches from heavy exertion in extreme heat. They are usually the first sign of heat-related complications.
- **Heat Exhaustion**—A form of mild shock that results from insufficient body fluids due to extreme heat and excessive exercising. The blood flow to the skin increases, decreasing blood flow to vital organs, raising the body temperature, and increasing the risk of a heat stroke. Symptoms include—
 - Often pale with cool, moist skin
 - Sweating profusely
 - Muscle cramps or pains
 - Feeling faint or dizzy
 - Headaches, weakness, thirst, and nausea
 - Elevated core temperature—usually more than 100°F—and increased pulse rate

Heat Emergencies (continued)

- **Heat Stroke/Sun Stroke**—The body’s temperature control system stops working, causing body temperature to rise so high that there may be brain damage or death. Symptoms include—
 - Unconsciousness or markedly abnormal mental status (dizziness, confusion, hallucinations, or coma)
 - Flushed, hot, and dry skin (although it may be moist initially from previous sweating or from attempts to cool the person with water)
 - Slightly elevated blood pressure at first that drops later
 - Hyperventilating
 - Core temperature of 105°F or more
- If you experience or observe any of the above conditions, seek medical attention immediately.

Where to Find Additional Information

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)—
 - www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/extremeheat/index.asp
 - www.bt.cdc.gov/poweroutage/pdf/poweroutage.pdf
- Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Ready.gov—www.ready.gov/heat

Semper Paratus

Be “Always Ready.” Be informed about what might happen, make an emergency plan with your family, and build an emergency supply kit good for at least three days.
