



**DALLAS COUNTY
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
OFFICE OF PUBLIC INFORMATION**

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DCHHS Reminds the Public to Exercise Precaution During Triple Digit Days

July 30, 2008 (Dallas) — Weather forecasts continue to predict triple digit temperatures for Dallas County for the foreseeable future. This combination of daytime highs above 100 degrees, nighttime lows over 75 and high levels of humidity during extended periods of time places everyone at increased risk of heat-related illnesses, injuries and death. The elderly, the very young and persons with preexisting health conditions are at higher risk for these heat-related illnesses.

DCHHS is asking for the community's help to ensure the safety of every resident of Dallas County. Start an "Each One Reach One" group in your community and check on your neighbors. This is especially important for elderly persons and those who live alone. Daily welfare checks can identify issues, such as lack of air conditioning, that can cause serious injury or even death. If you notice someone suddenly experiencing sudden high temperature (but less than 104 degrees), hot and flushed skin that might be clammy to the touch, muscle or stomach cramps, nausea and/or vomiting, headache, profuse sweating, rapid pulse, or dizziness they may be suffering from heat exhaustion. Heat exhaustion is not usually a life-threatening condition. The important rules to remember regarding heat exhaustion are to get the ill person out of the sun. Replace the body's lost fluids and salt by having the person drink lots of water, Gatorade, decaffeinated iced tea, or juice. Cool the person's body with fans, cool towels, or sprays. Keep the sufferer out of the sun for the next 12–24 hours. **Seek Medical attention IMMEDIATELY if symptoms do not improve!**

DCHHS officials also urge the public to remember to **look before you leave** in order to avoid leaving a child in a car. **Remember to NEVER leave a child in a closed, parked car.** In Texas leaving a child in a car is not only dangerous, it's also illegal. According to Texas law, anyone who leaves a child younger than the age of 7 unsupervised in a motor vehicle faces a Class C misdemeanor. If the child is hurt, the person could be charged with child endangerment, a felony. DCHHS officials ask that if you see a child left unattended in a parked car, **to call 9-1-1 immediately and stay with the car until help arrives.** Finally DCHHS asks **all citizens** to follow a few simple precautions and warnings to stay safe in the sweltering, dog days of summer:

- If you do not have cooled, air-conditioning in your home, you should go to mall, library and other places with air-conditioning.

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- Drink plenty of fluids; avoid drinks containing alcohol, caffeine or sugar.
- Dress for the summer by wearing lightweight, light-colored clothing.
- Take cool baths and showers frequently.
- Exercise during evening and early morning hours when the temperature may be lower.
- Encourage children and the elderly to stay in the shade.
- Check frequently on ill or elderly friends, relatives, neighbors who may need help.
- If you have pre-existing medical conditions, avoid strenuous and prolonged outdoor activities;
- Listen to the news for heat alerts and public health messages.
- Adjust to the environment. Sudden change in temperature – an early heat wave or travel to a hotter climate – will be stressful to the body. Limit your physical activity until you become accustomed to the heat.
- Check with a doctor about the effects of sun and heat when taking prescription drugs, especially diuretics or antihistamines.

“DCHHS conducts syndromic surveillance with our hospital emergency rooms and County Medical Examiners office to monitor and track cases of heat-related illness and death among Dallas County residents,” stated Zachary Thompson, DCHHS Director. “This program allows us to identify trends in the community and issue public health alerts to citizens and community partners. DCHHS is also able to respond in various ways to many community-wide emergencies from conducting door-to-door checks in neighborhoods to the opening of heat shelters to providing air conditioning to elderly and disabled residents.” The DCHHS Heat-Related Illness Surveillance Program was recently selected as a Model Practice by the National Association of City and County Health Officials.

So far this year, DCHHS has detected 101 cases of heat-related illnesses with six possible deaths under investigation. During 2007, the DCHHS Heat-Related Illness Surveillance Program received reports of 155 heat-related incidences; 130 cases of Heat exhaustion, 12 cases of Heat Cramps, and 13 cases of Heat Stroke. There were no deaths related to heat reported in the County last year. This mirrors the fact the last year was a cooler season with lower temperatures and fewer instances of extended periods of dangerously how heat and humidity. In 1998 there were 35 deaths, in 2001 there were 15 deaths, in 2004 there was 1 death, in 2005 there were no deaths and in 2006 there were 21 deaths. For more information on summer heat precautions, visit our website at www.dallascounty.org

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