

## **June 5 is Heat Awareness Day**

DES MOINES – The Iowa Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (HSEMD) and the National Weather Service (NWS) have designated June 5, 2014, as Heat Awareness Day in Iowa.

Heat is one of the most deadly weather phenomena. According to the NWS, in a normal year, more people die on average due to excessive heat than floods, lightning, tornadoes and hurricanes combined.

In Iowa, summer means two things: heat and humidity. Both combine to create conditions which tax the human body beyond its natural cooling abilities. Heat is a silent killer, and knowing the dangers of summer heat and how to prepare for it can save lives.

### **During hot weather:**

- Eat well-balanced, light meals.
- Drink plenty of water regularly. Certain persons should consult a doctor before increasing liquid intake, including those who have epilepsy or heart, kidney, or liver disease, those who are on fluid-restrictive diets, or those who have a problem with fluid retention.
- Limit intake of alcoholic beverages. Although beer and alcoholic beverages appear to satisfy thirst, they actually cause further body dehydration.
- Stay indoors as much as possible. If air conditioning is not available, stay on the lowest floor out of the sunshine.
- 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.
- Dress in loose-fitting clothes that cover as much skin as possible. Choose lightweight, light-colored clothing that reflects heat and sunlight and helps maintain normal body temperature.
- Protect the face and head by wearing a wide-brimmed hat.

### **Children and automobiles: a lethal combination**

Every year in the United States, several children die from hyperthermia. Even on a mild, 72-degree day, a child can die from heat stroke. According to the Department of Geosciences at San Francisco State University, so far in 2014 there have been at least five heatstroke deaths of children in vehicles. In 2013, there were at least 44 deaths of children in vehicles and since 1998, there have been at least 606 documented cases of heatstroke deaths of children in vehicles. Never leave your children unattended in an automobile. Beat the heat – check the backseat!

**Older people are particularly vulnerable**

Our older citizens are extremely vulnerable to heat stress. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), older people are more prone to heat stress than younger people for several reasons, including the likelihood of having medical conditions that change the body's normal responses to heat, and taking medications that impair the body's ability to regulate its temperature. If you have older relatives or neighbors, be sure to check on them frequently during hot weather and watch for signs of heat stroke and heat exhaustion. Learn more on the [CDC website](#).

**Don't forget your pets**

Your pets are also at risk for heat stroke. Dogs overheat even faster than children. Leaving your pet in your car in the summer, even with the windows cracked, can be a fatal mistake.

For more heat safety tips, visit the [Ready Iowa](#) or [National Weather Service \(Des Moines\)](#) websites. To read HSEMD's blog about heat awareness, visit the [HSEMD website](#).

The Iowa Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management leads, coordinates and supports homeland security and emergency management functions in order to establish sustainable communities and ensure economic opportunities for Iowa and its citizens.

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