

# Emergency Preparedness Pointers



## HEAT WAVE



Heat kills by pushing the human body beyond its limits. During an average summer, approximately 200 people across our country die due to heat related injuries as a result of high summer temperatures. Under normal conditions, the body's internal thermostat produces perspiration that evaporates and cools the body, however, in extreme heat, evaporation is slowed and the body must work extra hard to maintain a normal body temperature. Most heat disorders occur because the victim has been overexposed to heat or has overexerted themselves for their age and physical condition.

### Terms to Know

**Heat Cramps** – muscular pains and spasms due to heavy exertion. They usually involve the abdominal muscles or legs. Loss of water and dehydration from heavy sweating typically causes heat cramps.

**Heat Exhaustion** – occurs when people exercise heavily or work in a hot, humid place where body fluids are lost through heavy sweating. Blood flow to the skin increases, causing blood flow to decrease to the vital organs. This results in a form of mild shock. If not treated, the victim's condition will worsen. Body temperature will keep rising and the victim may suffer heat stroke.

**Heat Stroke** – is life-threatening. The victim's temperature control system, which produces sweat to cool the body, stops working. The body temperature can rise so high that brain damage and/or death may result if the body is not cooled quickly.

### During a Heat Wave



- ✓ **Slow down.** Avoid strenuous activity. If you must, do it during the coolest part of the day.
- ✓ **Stay indoors** as much as possible. If air conditioning is not available, stay on the lowest floor, away from any windows.

- ✓ **Wear lightweight, light-colored clothing.** Light colors will reflect away some of the sun's energy.
- ✓ **Drink water regularly,** even if you're not thirsty. Your body needs water to keep cool.
- ✓ **Avoid drinks with alcohol or caffeine.** They will only make the heat's effect on your body worse. They are diuretics, which actually dehydrate your body.
- ✓ **Eat small meals** and avoid foods that are high in protein, which increase metabolic rate.
- ✓ **Wear sunscreen** with an SPF of at least 15. Not only can sunburn damage the skin, but even mild sunburn can keep the skin from compensating for excessive heat.

### Symptoms of Heat Emergencies

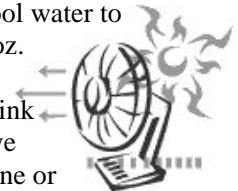
**Heat Exhaustion** – Cool, moist, pale or flushed skin; heavy sweating; headache; nausea or vomiting; dizziness and exhaustion. Body temperature will show near normal.

**Heat Stroke** – Hot, red skin; changes in consciousness; rapid, weak pulse and rapid, shallow breathing. Body temp can be very high. The skin will be hot, dry, red or flushed, even under the armpits.

### Treatment of Heat Emergencies

**Heat Cramps** - Get the person to rest in a comfortable position in a cooler place. Lightly stretch the affected muscle and replenish fluids. Give half a glass of water – approx 4-6 oz. – every 15 minutes. Do not give liquids containing caffeine or alcohol.

**Heat Exhaustion** – Get the person out of the heat. Remove or loosen tight clothing and apply cool, wet cloths or towels. If the person is conscious, give cool water to drink, approx 4-6oz. every 15 minutes. Make sure they drink slowly. Do not give liquids with caffeine or alcohol. Have the victim rest and watch for changes in their condition.



**Heat Stroke** – This is a life-threatening condition. Help is needed right away. Call 911 immediately. Find a cooler place, lay the person down and work quickly to cool their body. If possible, immerse them in a cool bath or wrap them in wet sheets or cloths and fan them. Watch for any breathing problems. If the person is vomiting or there are changes in consciousness, do not give them anything to drink. Keep the person lying down and continue to cool the body any way you can until medical help arrives.