

PRESS RELEASE



Phil Dyer
Mayor

Harry LaRosiliere
Mayor Pro Tem

Lee Dunlap
Deputy Mayor Pro Tem

Pat Miner
Place 1

Ben Harris
Place 2

Mabrie Jackson
Place 3

Lissa Smith
Place 4

Jean Callison
Place 7

Thomas H. Muehlenbeck
City Manager

For Immediate Release
June 24, 2009

Contact:
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CAUTION URGED AS SUMMER HEAT BEGINS TO RISE

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, between 1979-2003 excessive heat exposure caused 8,015 deaths in the United States, more than hurricanes, lightning, tornadoes, floods and earthquakes combined.

Several factors affect the body's ability to cool itself during extremely hot weather. While sweating normally is the body's reaction to cool itself, under some conditions it simply isn't enough. Physical activity, high humidity, age, obesity, fever, dehydration, heart disease, poor circulation, sunburn and even prescription drug usage can contribute to heat-related illness during extremely hot weather.

"Each year we respond to heat-related medical incidents that were preventable," said Plano Fire Captain Peggy Harrell. "While the elderly, the very young and persons with chronic diseases are at highest risk, even healthy, young persons can succumb to heat if they participate in strenuous activities during hot weather."

"Extreme heat is measured by temperatures that hover 10 or more degrees above our average high temperatures for our region," said Plano's Emergency Management/Homeland Security Director Shane Stovall. "This can be particularly dangerous when we hit a stretch of several weeks of high heat combined with the muggy humid conditions that often accompany a heat wave."

"The main thing to remember is that physical activity must be balanced against heat factors and the risk factors of age and physical condition. Common sense is one of the best preventions anyone has at their disposal," said Captain Harrell.

Ways to combat the heat:

Drink plenty of fluids. Don't wait until you are thirsty to drink. During heavy exercise in a hot environment drink two to four glasses of cool fluids each hour. Avoid alcohol or high sugar content beverages. Sports beverages are geared to replace any salt and minerals you lose through sweating.

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Wear appropriate clothing and sunscreen. Choose lightweight, light-colored, loose-fitting clothing and protect yourself with sunscreen SPF15 or higher, along with sunglasses and a wide brimmed hat.

Schedule outdoor activities carefully and pace yourself. Try to limit outdoor activity to morning and evening hours, resting in shady areas when possible. STOP all activity if your heart begins to pound, you are gasping for breath, become lightheaded, confused or weak. Closely watch young children and infants who may quickly become affected by extreme heat.

Stay indoors when possible in an air-conditioned place. If your home doesn't have air conditioning, electric fans may provide comfort, but will not prevent heat-related illness in extreme heat. Traveling to an air conditioned public library or mall, even for a few hours, can help your body stay cooler when you go back into the heat. Take cool showers or baths and use your stove and oven less to maintain cooler temperatures in your home.

Use a buddy system. Monitor the condition of your companions in the heat and have someone do the same for you. Heat-induced illness can creep up on people, causing them to become confused or lose consciousness. Check on relatives or friends twice a day during a heat wave if they are at risk due to age, illness, physical condition, lack of air conditioning or other risk factors.

Adjust to the environment. Any sudden change in temperature, such as an early summer heat wave, is stressful to your body. Limit your daily activity until you become accustomed to the heat; work up to it gradually.

Do not leave children in cars. Temperatures can rise almost 20 degrees within only 10 minutes. Anyone left inside a car is at risk for serious heat-related illnesses or death, even if windows are cracked open. Always do a head count when you have several small children entering or exiting the car. The same danger applies to pets as well.

Recognizing the symptoms of heat stroke can save a life. Warning signs include rapid, strong pulse, red, hot dry skin (no sweating), an extremely high body temperature, confusion, nausea, dizziness and headache. Place the victim in a shady area or indoors, cooling as quickly as possible with any methods available, including a cool shower, spraying with a garden hose, sponging with cool water. Do not give fluids to drink. Get medical assistance as soon as possible.

Heat Exhaustion is the pre-cursor to heat stroke and may include heavy sweating, muscle cramps, nausea, and dizziness with fast and shallow breathing. The

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symptoms should subside as the victim cools off, but medical attention should be sought if symptoms worsen or last longer than one hour.

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