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Managing the heat

Michelle Manto

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This past weekend was hot! It was really hot! My grandmother used to tell us to keep the shades down on sunny, hot days so that it was cooler inside. Good advice, but not enough. Water, water, water. Make sure you drink enough and have enough with you at all times. Dress in light colored clothing that is light weight. A hat and/or umbrella helps keep the sun out of your eyes and the sun directly off your head. If possible, try to get all your outside activities done as early as possible. If where you live is too hot, visit the library, see a movie or visit a friend that has air conditioning. Under no circumstance leave a person, pet or any living thing in the car, truck, or trailer for more than a minute. Yes, it only takes about 2 minutes for the temperature in a vehicle to go from safe to unsafe.

The heat index tells us how hot it actually is when air temperature and humidity are combined. According to the National Weather Service, if the temperature was at 96 degrees with a relative humidity of 65%, the heat index, or how it feels, would be 121 degrees.

During an excessive heat event it is very important to be aware of the following:

- Slow down: reduce, eliminate or reschedule strenuous activities until the coolest time of the day. Children, seniors and anyone with health problems should stay in the coolest available place, not necessarily indoors.
- Eat light, cool, easy-to-digest foods such as fruit or salads. If you pack food, put it in a cooler or carry an ice pack. Don't leave it sitting in the sun. Meats and dairy products can spoil quickly in hot weather.
- Do not direct the flow of portable electric fans toward yourself when room temperature is hotter than 90°F. The dry blowing air will dehydrate you faster, endangering your health.
- Take a cool bath or shower.
- Check on older, sick, or frail people who may need help responding to the heat. Each year, dozens of children and untold numbers of pets left in parked vehicles die from hyperthermia. Keep your children, disabled adults, and pets safe during tumultuous heat waves.

If you work outdoors....

- Drink water often
- Rest and cool down in the shade during breaks
- Gradually increase workload and allow more frequent breaks for new workers or workers who have been away for a week or more
- Know symptoms, prevention, and emergency response to prevent heat-related illness and death
- Check weather forecasts ahead of time to be better prepared.

Be safe. Be smart.

Here's to the Health of your Life.

