



Rapid Reference: Heat Emergencies

A resource for Cuyahoga County communities from the Cuyahoga County Office of Emergency Management



This reference, intended for your community's emergency planning personnel, provides a template for developing a Heat Emergency Plan for your community and describes Cuyahoga County's ability to provide support during a Heat Emergency.

Common Terminology:

The Cuyahoga County Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) defines the following heat-related terms, consistent with the National Weather Service (NWS):

Heat Advisory: Issued within 12 hours of the onset of the following conditions: heat index of at least 105°F but less than 115°F for less than 3 hours per day, or nighttime lows above 80°F for 2 consecutive days.

Excessive Heat Watch: Issued when heat indices in excess of 105°F during the day combined with nighttime low temperatures of 80°F or higher are forecast to occur for two consecutive days.

Excessive Heat Warning: Issued within 12 hours of the onset of the following criteria: heat index of at least 105°F for more than 3 hours per day for 2 consecutive days, or heat index more than 115°F for any period of time.

Heat Index: What the temperature feels like to the human body based on both the air temperature and humidity. Exposure to direct sunlight

can increase the heat index by 15 degrees.

Key Messages for your citizens:

**See Attachment A for sample news release*

DO

- Reduce outside activity levels when possible.
- Use air conditioners or spend time in air conditioned locations such as malls and libraries- if air conditioning is not available stay on the lowest floor out of the sun.
- Use portable electric fans to exhaust hot air from rooms or draw in cooler air.
- Wear lightweight, loose-fitting, light colored clothing. Light colors reflect more of the sun's energy than dark colors.
- Drink plenty of fluids. Water is the best. Avoid drinks containing alcohol or caffeine.
- Eat light, cool, easy-to-digest foods such as fruit or salads.
- Take a cool bath or shower.
- Avoid using salt tablets unless directed by a physician.
- Avoid getting sunburned - use sunscreen if you must go outside.
- Parents and caretakers should provide children with plenty of fluids and be careful not to overdress them.
- Check regularly on the elderly and young children.

DON'T

- Direct the flow of portable electric fans toward yourself when room temperature is hotter than 90°F.
- Leave children and pets alone in cars for any amount of time.
- Drink alcohol to try to stay cool.
- Eat heavy, hot, or hard-to-digest foods.

- Wear heavy, dark clothing.

County Assistance:

As in any emergency, the Cuyahoga County Office of Emergency Management is available to coordinate resources and provide information in support of your local response to a heat emergency.

- To request support from OEM during normal business hours, contact the main line: (216) 443-5700.
- After hours, contact OEM through the Cuyahoga Emergency Communications System (CECOMS) 24/7 line: (216) 771-1363.

Upon request, the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) may be activated to assist responding personnel in the following ways:

- Establish an Incident Command Post: Due to the lack of a specific incident scene in a heat emergency, the EOC can serve as an Incident Command Post (ICP), from which incident command will determine appropriate response efforts.
- Issue Public Warnings: The EOC has the ability to use a number of mediums to communicate to the general public regarding the nature of the hazard, and recommendations for protective actions if required.
- Coordinate Resources: The EOC can assist in obtaining, deploying, and tracking resources requested by responding personnel. Resources coordinated through the EOC during a heat emergency may include the following:
 - Establishment of cooling centers during an Excessive Heat Warning
 - Transportation of affected persons to cooling centers and other select locations

Local Plan Reference Template:

The template below can be used to reference your community's Heat Emergency Plan. If you do not yet have a Heat Emergency Plan, the Cuyahoga County Office of Emergency Management can assist in the development process.

[Jurisdiction Name] Heat Emergency Plan

Key Points of Contact:

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-
-
-

Action Levels (list responses for each of the following heat levels):

Heat Advisory

-
-
-

Excessive Heat Watch

-
-
-

Excessive Heat Warning

-
-
-

Narrative Content:

[Description of what decisions will be made, and by whom. Additionally, this section should outline resources that may need to be requested, and who is responsible for this task.]

Attachment A

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

[Date of publication]

News Advisory **[Jurisdiction] Activates Heat Safety Plan**

[Municipality] – The National Weather Service has issued a [heat advisory level] for [time frame]. To provide for citizen safety, the [jurisdiction] has activated the Heat Safety Plan. [Facilities] have been designated as “Cooling Centers” and will be open from [time to time]. In addition, [list other services offered, actions being taken, etc.].

Be a good neighbor:

Although anyone at any time can suffer from heat-related illness, some people are at greater risk than others. Check regularly on the elderly, young children, and individuals who are physically or mentally disabled or ill.

Simple steps to stay cool:

- Drink plenty of cool fluids that do not contain alcohol or large amounts of sugar.
- Stay indoors and, if at all possible, stay in an air-conditioned place. If your home does not have air conditioning, go to a public location such as a shopping mall or library.
- Electric fans may provide comfort, but when the temperature is in the high 90s, fans will not prevent heat-related illness. Taking a cool shower or bath, or moving to an air- conditioned place is a much better way to cool off.
- Wear lightweight, light-colored, loose-fitting clothing.
- NEVER leave anyone in a closed, parked vehicle.
- If you must be outside, limit your outdoor activity to morning and evening hours, and use broad spectrum sunscreen of SPF 15 or higher.
- *Warning: If you have specific fluid or dietary restrictions, check with your doctor before altering your diet.*

For more information:

[list jurisdiction website, information line, etc.]

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