



Brenda Fitzgerald, M.D., Commissioner

Nathan Deal, Governor

2 Peachtree St NW, 15th Floor
Atlanta, Georgia 30303-3142
www.health.state.ga.us

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

July 12, 2011

CONTACT:

Kallarin Richards

Hot Weather Alert: Georgians Urged to Use Caution

ATLANTA – As the heat index is expected to reach over 105 degrees today, the Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH) is warning all Georgians to exercise caution in the extreme heat. The National Weather Service (NWS) has issued a heat advisory that will remain in effect today from 11 a.m. to 5 a.m. Wednesday for much of Central and portions of North Georgia.

“Everyone should take proper precautions to stay safe in this extreme heat by staying hydrated and wearing protective clothing,” said Brenda Fitzgerald, M.D., DPH Commissioner. “According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, extreme heat causes about 400 deaths across the nation each year. Children and the elderly are particularly at risk during such high temperatures, and should be monitored closely.”

The high today is expected to be from 95 to 100 degrees this afternoon. The Georgia Department of Natural Resources has issued a Code Orange Air Quality Alert for Atlanta, which means air pollution may be unhealthy for some people, particularly children, the elderly and those with asthma.

It’s important to know the signs and symptoms of medical conditions that can occur as a result of heat. Heat exhaustion symptoms are heavy sweating, weakness, cold, pale and clammy skin, a thready pulse, and possible fainting and vomiting. Heat stroke is a severe medical emergency that occurs when the body temperature reaches 106 degrees or higher. Symptoms include hot dry skin, rapid and strong pulse, and possible unconsciousness. Summon immediate emergency medical assistance.

The Georgia Department of Public Health is encouraging Georgians to follow these tips to stay safe in extreme heat:

Stay hydrated. When working outside, drink plenty of water even if you are not thirsty, and take rest breaks in the shade. Avoid alcoholic beverages or those containing caffeine as they cause dehydration.

Stay Cool Indoors. The best way to beat the heat is to stay in an air conditioned area. Finding a place to cool down, at least temporarily, can provide some relief and allow a

person's body to recover from higher temperatures. If you don't have an air conditioner, go to a shopping mall or public building for a few hours.

Avoid sun exposure. Reduce exposure to the sun from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. when UV rays are strongest, and keep physical activities to a minimum during that time.

Use a buddy system. Check on your friends, family, and the elderly. Monitor elderly neighbors and relatives often to watch for signs of heat-related stress. The elderly population and those with weakened immune systems are more likely to suffer from extreme and prolonged exposure to heat.

About the Georgia Department of Public Health

The Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH) is the lead agency responsible for the health of Georgia's communities and the entire population. In 2011, the General Assembly restored DPH to its own state agency after more than 30 years consolidated under other departments. At the state level, DPH is divided into numerous divisions, sections, programs and offices, and at the local level, DPH functions via 18 health districts and 155 county health departments. Through the changes, the mission has remained constant – to protect the lives of all Georgians. Today, DPH's main functions include: Health Promotion and Disease Prevention, Maternal and Child Health, Infectious Disease and Immunization, Environmental Health, Epidemiology, Emergency Preparedness and Response, Emergency Medical Services, Pharmacy, Nursing, Volunteer Health Care, the Office of Health Equity, Vital Records and the State Public Health Laboratory. For more information on DPH, visit www.health.state.ga.us.

###