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State Emergency, Health Officials Respond to Extreme Heat Advisory in Los Angeles and Riverside Counties

SACRAMENTO – In response to the re-issuance of an “extreme heat advisory” today by the Los Angeles County Public Health Department, the Governor’s Office of Emergency Services (OES) and the California Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA) have activated Phase I of the state’s Interim Contingency Plan for Excessive Heat Emergencies.

Temperatures in the 90s to triple digits are expected in today and Wednesday in the desert areas, mountains and parts of the San Gabriel, San Fernando, Santa Clarita, and Antelope Valleys.

In addition, a heat advisory issued by Riverside County on Friday remains in effect for the entire county, except the cities of Blythe and Thermal. County officials have issued a heat warning for those communities. Temperatures in some areas of the county are expected to reach 105 degrees.

“The safety of residents in Los Angeles and Riverside counties remains our utmost concern,” said OES Director Henry Renteria. “We will continue work closely with our State counterparts to help Los Angeles and Riverside counties meet the needs for residents impacted by these high temperatures.”

The California Department of Health Services has activated its Joint Emergency Operations Center (JEOC) in response to the heat advisories issued by Los Angeles and Riverside counties.

The California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) has opened its fairground at 2551 W. Avenue H, Lancaster as a cooling center to augment those already opened by Los Angeles County. Locations of the cooling centers opened by Los Angeles County are available under “Recent News” on the Los Angeles County Department of Health Services’ website at www.ladhs.org/media/.

In Riverside County, CDFA has opened cooling centers at the Colorado River Fair, 11995 Olive Lake Boulevard in Blythe, and the Riverside County Fair, 46350 Arabia Street in Indio. Information about locally operated cooling centers in Riverside County is available at <http://www.rivcoph.org/>.

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"Many individuals don't realize the toll that hot weather can take," said State Health Officer Dr. Mark Horton. "During extreme heat, cooling off for just a few hours can prevent heat stress." Dr. Horton also urged residents of Los Angeles and Riverside counties to reach out and check on their elderly friends, neighbors, and family members, as well as persons with disabilities to ensure they remain comfortable and safe.

When the weather is hot, it's important to stay out of the sun, drink lots of liquids and reduce your physical activity. Use air conditioning and fans or get to a location that is air conditioned. Cool compresses, misting and baths can lower body temperature. Wear lightweight, loose fitting clothing. If you must work outside, take shelter periodically, stay hydrated and take breaks.

According to health officials, prolonged hot days and nights can create more than just a case of summer discomfort—they can bring about serious and even life-threatening health conditions that are preventable.

Very high body temperatures can damage the brain and other vital organs. Please watch for early signs that you or someone you care about may be having trouble with the heat.

For example, heat cramps or heat exhaustion can result when large amounts of body fluids are lost through perspiration. Extreme weakness or fatigue may be accompanied by elevated body temperatures, nausea, headaches, vomiting, and other serious symptoms. A more dangerous health condition—heat stroke—is characterized by elevated body temperatures (perhaps 105 degrees or more) and shock and requires immediate first aid.

OES and HHSA officials offered the following tips to help prevent heat-related illness:

- Visit www.dhs.ca.gov or www.redcross.org for comprehensive guidelines about staying healthy in hot weather.
- Outdoor workers require special precautions during excessive heat conditions and employers must follow California's heat illness prevention regulations (www.dir.ca.gov/oshsb/heatillnessoaltext.doc).
- Children up to age 4, people taking certain medications, persons with disabilities, and seniors age 65 and over are particularly less able to cope with hotter weather and should be monitored throughout the day for signs of heat-related illness.
- Regardless of your activity level, drink more fluids —especially water—and more than you think you need. Your body needs water for many crucial functions and dehydration can lead to serious health effects.
- Make sure clothing is lightweight and comfortable and—if you're planning to be outdoors—avoid the hottest parts of the day by scheduling activities during cooler hours (generally mornings and evenings). Also be sure to wear a hat and use sunscreen because sunburn affects the body's ability to cool itself.
- Don't over exert. Stay cool indoors by turning on an air conditioner or evaporative cooling system. If you don't have access to air conditioned space at home, please visit a local shopping mall, senior center, public library, community center, or other facility that is open to the public.
- Do not rely only on electric fans during a heat wave. When the temperature is in the 90s or above, a fan will not prevent heat-related illness. A cool shower or bath is a better way to beat the heat and keep body temperatures at safer levels.

- Use common sense. Avoid hot meals and heavy, spicy foods when the weather gets hot. Eat smaller meals more often.
- Never leave infants, children, or pets unattended in your vehicle, not even for a moment.
- If you, or someone you know, may be at risk for heat-related illness, talk to a doctor or pharmacist.
- And call 911 in the event of a true health emergency. Help is available.

Information on the heat-related preparedness and issues is also available at the OES website at www.oes.ca.gov. Additional information about cooling centers in the impacted areas is available through the California Department of Consumer Affairs' toll-free number at 1-800-952-5210.

California's Interim Contingency Plan for Excessive Heat Emergencies was developed at the direction of Governor Schwarzenegger by a task force that includes representatives from OES, the state Health and Human Services Agency, and other state and local agencies.

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