



STATE OF WASHINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL AND HEALTH SERVICES
Aging and Long-Term Support Administration
PO Box 45600, Olympia, Washington 98504-5600

June 8, 2023

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PRECAUTIONS FOR RESIDENTS AND STAFF RELATED TO HEATWAVE

Dear Provider/Administrator/Superintendent:

It is expected that temperatures across Washington will continue to reach triple digits this summer. Both staff and residents must take necessary precautions to prevent complications related to excessive heat.

Residents with a history of dehydration, cardiovascular disease, or pulmonary disease are particularly susceptible to heat-related illnesses and complications. All staff should be aware and monitoring for signs, symptoms, and consequences of heat exhaustion, heat stroke, and heat cramps.

Heat Exhaustion:

- Warning Signals: Gradual weakness, nausea, anxiety, excess sweating, syncope (fainting).
- Appearance and Signs: Skin is pale, grayish, and clammy.
- Management: For syncope, place head down and administer cool, slightly salty fluids immediately.

Heat Stroke (Serious Emergency):

- Warning Signals: Headache, weakness, sudden or worsening confusion, and sudden loss of consciousness.
- Appearance and Signs: Hot, red, dry skin, little sweating, very high temperature, and hard, rapid pulse.
- Management: Immediately cool skin by wrapping or immersing in cold water or ice. Call 911 or paramedics.

Heat Cramps:

- Warning Signals: Severe cramps and spasms in the arms, legs, or abdomen.
- Appearance and Signs: Skin may be hot and dry, or cool and clammy, depending on the humidity. The muscles feel like hard knots.
- Management: Provide cool fluids and foods containing sodium chloride (table salt).

The following measures should be taken to prevent heat-related illnesses. Some recommended interventions for your facility may include the following:

- Alert staff to monitor residents for the signs and symptoms of heat illness (listed above). Notify the resident's physician of such observations and obtain medical services as needed.

Dear Provider/Admin/Superintendent: Heatwave Precautions

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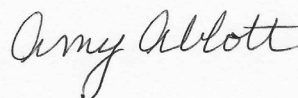
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- Review resident medications and identify those that may cause residents to become more susceptible to harm from heat and sunlight.
- Assure that facility policies and procedures for heat emergency situations are current, complete, and staff are trained.
- Monitor temperatures in care areas and resident rooms.
- Monitor choice of resident's clothing to ensure they are appropriate in extreme temperatures. Loose-fitting, light-colored cotton clothing is best to allow the skin to breathe.
- Help decrease temperatures by closing window blinds and turning off unneeded lights in the daytime.
- Assist residents to maintain adequate fluid intake. In addition to water, consider popsicles, Jell-o, sherbet, and juices to keep residents hydrated.
- When outside, encourage residents to sit in shaded areas and to use sunscreen.
- Close windows, doors, and blinds during the daytime and open them at night after the outside temperature cools sufficiently. Please visit the [DOH Hot Weather Safety webpage](#).

Extreme heat should be treated as a major weather emergency, just like an extreme storm and the possibility of power outages. Now is the time to pull out the facility emergency and disaster plans, ensure they are up to date, and that staff are educated on how and what to do. Generators and auxiliary power systems should be tested, ensuring there is adequate fuel and supplies on hand, and knowing what building systems (including HVAC) will work when using a generator. Ensure adequate water supplies and fuel is available to shelter residents in place for several days should the need arise. Be ready as resources could be depleted by the time extreme weather occurs.

Thank you for your continued commitment to resident health and safety. If you have any questions, please contact RCSPolicy@dshs.wa.gov.

Sincerely,



Amy Abbott, Director
Residential Care Services

DSHS: "Transforming Lives"