



News Release

12 July 2013

Level 2 ‘Heatwave’ alert issued for this weekend

Parts of England may experience ‘heatwave’ conditions over the next few days, according to forecasts from the Met Office. Areas particularly affected include Yorkshire and the Humber, Southeast England, London and Southwest England, East of England and East Midlands – but people in the West Midlands should still follow guidelines on how to keep safe in the sunshine; seeking shade, using sunblock and wearing suitable clothing and sunglasses if outdoors for more than 20 minutes.

Level 2 alerts are triggered as soon as the Met Office forecasts that there is a 60 per cent chance of temperatures being high enough on at least two consecutive days to have a significant effect on health. This will normally happen 2-3 days before a heatwave is expected to occur. As most deaths occur in the first two days, this is an important stage at which to ensure readiness and swift action to reduce harm from a potential heatwave.

Even if temperatures do not hit ‘extreme’ levels, Public Health England still advises people to keep safe in the sun, seek shade to cool down and keep hydrated with plenty of cool fluids.

Top advice for being sun safe:

- Try to keep out of the sun between 11am and 3pm
- Wear sunscreen
- Wear loose cotton clothing
- Drink lots of cool drinks
- Seek shade
- Wear sunglasses and a hat
- Look out for others especially vulnerable groups such as the elderly, young children and babies and those with serious illnesses
- Never leave anyone in a closed, parked vehicle, especially infants, young children or animals

Remember that it can get uncomfortably hot indoors too. Try to keep your bedroom and living space cool, by closing the curtains on windows that receive the sun and opening your windows at cooler times of the day and overnight when you can. Turn off non-essential lights and electrical items as these generate heat.

Health and social care workers should regularly check on vulnerable patients, share sun safety messages, make sure room temperatures are set below 26 degrees and ensure patients have access to cold water and ice.

Local authorities, professionals and community groups can prepare for hot weather by reviewing the Heatwave Plan on the PHE website.

Dr Angie Bone, Heatwave Plan lead for PHE, said: “While many people enjoy hot weather, high temperatures can be dangerous, especially for people who may be particularly vulnerable such as older people, young children and those with serious illnesses.

“The Heatwave Plan is an important component of overall emergency planning and sets out a series of clear actions that can be taken by healthcare organisations, local authorities, professionals working with vulnerable people, and individuals to help keep people safe during extreme heat. To prepare for any type of hot weather this summer, we strongly encourage each locality to consider the actions in this plan and adapt them to their local situation, as a component of wider resilience planning and long-term climate change adaptation arrangements.

“Everyone can enjoy the sun safely by keeping out of the heat at the hottest time of the day, avoiding sunburn and staying hydrated with plenty of cool drinks. The elderly and those with long-term illnesses are particularly vulnerable to the effects of very hot weather, so it's important to look out for them and keep indoor areas as cool as possible.”

For more information on the PHE Heatwave Plan, please visit:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/heatwave-plan-for-england-2013>

Notes to Editors

1. Public Health England is a new executive agency of the Department of Health, which took up its full responsibilities on 1 April 2013. PHE will work with national and local government, industry and the NHS to protect and improve the nation's health and support healthier choices and will be addressing inequalities by focusing on removing barriers to good health. To find out more, visit our website www.gov.uk/phe and follow us on Twitter @PHE_uk

2. The Heatwave Plan for England 2013
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/201039/Heatwave-Main_Plan-2013.pdf) was published by Public Health England.
3. For more information about the Heat-Health Watch system from the Met Office, please visit:
<http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/weather/uk/heathealth/>
4. For more information about sun safety tips from Public Health England, please visit:
http://www.hpa.org.uk/Topics/Radiation/UnderstandingRadiation/AtAGlance/Flash_Sunsense/
5. For information about skin cancer and sun protection from Cancer Research UK, please visit:
<http://www.sunsmart.org.uk>

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