HAZARD OF THE MONTH:

Hazard of the Month: Heat Safety

As we approach warmer temperatures, it is important to keep heat safety in mind. Those most vulnerable to heat are infants and children, older adults, people with chronic medical conditions, people who work outdoors, and pregnant women. The obvious thing to do is to keep cool whether you are inside, outside, or in the car. In 2021, there were over 200 heat-related illnesses reported in Howard County. Here are some safety tips on how to beat the heat this summer.

Indoors

- Use air conditioning and fans to keep your home cool.
- Use drapes, shades, and/or window reflectors designed to reflect heat back outside.
- Make sure rooms are well vented.
- Stay hydrated and drink plenty of water.
  - Avoid alcohol, caffeinated, and sugary beverages because they cause dehydration.
- Eat light, cool, and easily digestible foods.
- Take cool showers or baths.
- In the event of a power outage, alert your service provider and have a plan for a nearby cool shelter. You could go to a friend’s place or visit your local mall or library in the interim.
  - Cooling centers with air conditioning and water will be opened in case of a heat emergency.
  - During a power outage keep your refrigerator closed.
    - Once the power comes on, don’t forget to check your refrigerated and frozen foods as they run the risk of spoiling.
  - Have coolers and ice on hand in case of an emergency.

Outdoors

Heat safety is especially important outdoors. Some of the risks outside include heat stroke, dehydration, and skin cancer. Skin cancer is the most common type of cancer. In 2018, a total of 1,696 cases of Melanoma were reported in Maryland. Refer to the following tips for ways to stay safe in the heat outside.
• When working outdoors, wear lightweight, loose, and light-colored clothing to reflect heat and sunlight.
• Try to minimize strenuous activities during times of the day when high heat is expected.
• Use sunscreen, hats, parasols, cooling rags, portable fans, and other cooling devices when you are outside for extended periods of time. Ultraviolet rays (UV rays), which causes skin cancers like squamous cell and basal cell carcinoma, tend to be the strongest between 10 am and 4 pm.
  o Stay in the shade whenever possible! Trees provide lots of natural shade. Tents and umbrellas are also good ways to create shade when you’re outside.
  o Don’t forget to reapply your sunscreen according to the directions on the label. Look for sunscreens that say, “broad spectrum” or “UVA/UVB protection.”
• Remember to keep food at proper temperatures when cooking outside or traveling. The use of ice, ice packs, and coolers can help.
  o When using ice packs, make sure to follow the proper directions and discard any ice packs that are leaking or broken.

Vehicle Use

Never leave a pet or person in a locked car. The temperature in a parked vehicle can rise very quickly to dangerous levels. About 38 kids die each year as a result of being left in a car unattended. Here are some suggestions on car safety in the heat!

• Open all windows when first turning on the air conditioning.
• Be careful when touching metal surfaces, such as seat belt buckles.
• Test surfaces before placing children in their car seats or booster seats.
  ▪ When possible, bring car seats and booster seats indoors to avoid overheating and deteriorating.
• Never leave children and pets in the car unattended, even with the windows cracked open.
• Use a windshield sunshade to keep your car’s interior temperature cooler. A dark dashboard or seat can easily reach temperatures in the range of 180 to over 200°F.
• Park in the shade and crack your windows whenever possible.
• Ensure proper car maintenance to avoid breakdowns on the road.

Weather Alerts and Codes

Always check the forecast daily to be aware of any weather-related alerts in the area. Make sure to consider the heat index which is a more accurate description of how hot it feels outside when other factors such as humidity are added to high temperature. A heat index of 130°F or higher is extremely dangerous and will most likely cause heatstroke or sunstroke.
Heat Safety Resources

https://www.weather.gov/safety/heat
https://www.osha.gov/heat
https://www.cdc.gov/disasters/extremeheat/heattips.htm
https://www.weather.gov/bgm/heat#:~:text=A%20heat%20warning%20means%20that,index%20of%20104°F.
https://health.maryland.gov/preparedness/Pages/resources_hot.aspx
https://www.weather.gov/ffc/hichart