

MHCA

Missouri Health Care Association

MEMBER ALERT

August 22, 2023

IMPORTANT MESSAGE FROM DHSS - SLCR REGARDING EXCESSIVE HEAT IMPACTING LTC FACILITIES

The DHSS, Section for Long-Term Care Regulation (“SLCR”) reached out to all the Associations that represent Long Term Care Facilities this afternoon regarding the excessive heat, their concerns and suggestions for how LTC facilities must handle the loss of an essential service, such as air conditioning.

Many facilities throughout the State are experiencing issues with their air conditioning units and unfortunately, IJs are being cited. The SLCR is witnessing a clear lack of emergency preparedness in relation to how these situations are being handled, specifically where older air conditioning units are not cooling the building. What they are seeing is that facilities are waiting until its too hot inside the building before implementing their emergency preparedness protocols.

IMPORTANT: At the first sign that your air conditioning system is unable to keep up with managing the proper temperature, you need to immediately implement your emergency preparedness protocols. Do not wait until it reaches a certain temperature!

And even if your air conditioning system appears to be operating normally, take the time to make sure that you have good systems in place, especially since these dangerously high temperatures are forecasted through the end of the week. And make sure you stay in communication with the SLCR if you lose an essential service.

EMERGENCY PROTOCOL FOR FACILITIES

The Emergency Protocol was developed in 2007 for communication between long-term care homes and the Section for Long-Term Care Regulation (SLCR), in the event a disaster occurs that results in a loss of a necessary service

(electricity, water, gas, telephone, etc.). This protocol was established to streamline communication so that homes can focus on what is most important - the safety and well-being of the residents.

This protocol ([Emergency Protocol Handout for Facilities](#)) provides the cellular telephone number corresponding to the region in which your home is located if you experience a loss in a necessary service - *for instance Air Conditioning* - that has the potential to affect resident safety or well-being. You are encouraged to contact the regional office main office telephone number during normal business hours as survey staff carry the cell phone and may be conducting a survey or inspection during working hours and may not answer immediately.

DANGEROUS HEAT WARNINGS FOR MISSOURI

The NWS has increased its forecast for dangerous heat indices through Thursday. This week, we will see the heat index top 120° in a large portion of the state.

Aside from the daily danger of the heat, the cumulative effects of multiple days and nights of these temperatures will increase chances for heat related illness and mortality, especially among children, older adults and adults with disabilities and those without cooling resources.

The NWS has also recommended that outdoor activities be postponed as much as possible.

During prolonged periods of high temperatures, using air conditioning - either at home or by seeking shelter in a [local cooling center](#) - is the best preventive measure.

During excessive heat, Missourians are urged to check on friends and neighbors, especially those who are elderly and chronically ill. To report a senior citizen or an adult with disabilities who is in need of assistance due to the heat, call the state's toll-free abuse and neglect hotline at 1-800-392-0210, or [make a report online](#). Medications, as well as use of drugs or alcohol, can impair a body's response to heat, making one more vulnerable to the heat.

Never leave a child or pet alone in a vehicle. Four of Missouri's heat-related deaths in 2022 were individuals in vehicles. Even on a cooler day, the temperature inside a vehicle can rise by 20 degrees in 10 minutes and pose a real threat to anyone left inside. Stress, distraction and being out of a normal routine can all contribute to forgetting a child in a car seat. Check the back seat each time you exit your vehicle.

There are a number of steps individuals can take to stay cool including:

- **Stay hydrated.**

Drink plenty of water regardless of your activity level, and do not wait until you are thirsty to do so. Avoid sugary and alcoholic beverages; these actually cause you to lose body fluids.

- **Wear appropriate clothing.**
Wear lightweight, breathable, and loose-fitting clothing that allows air circulation. When outside, consider wearing a hat and sunglasses to protect yourself from the sun.
- **Stay cool indoors.**
Stay in air-conditioned places as much as possible. Find a [local cooling center](#) if needed.
- **Schedule outdoor activities carefully.**
Try to plan outdoor activity for morning or evening hours when the temperature is coolest.
- **Pace yourself.**
Reduce exercise or physical activity during the hottest part of the day, and take frequent breaks in the shade or in an air-conditioned place.
- **Wear sunscreen.**
Sunburn affects your body's ability to cool down and can make you dehydrated.
- **Prepare your home.**
Change air conditioner filters, and cover windows that receive morning or afternoon sun with drapes or shades.
- **Stay informed**
Pay attention to [weather forecasts](#) and heat advisories. Stay informed about the local heat index and adjust safety measures accordingly.

Knowing the signs and symptoms of heat related illness and how treat them is also important. Signs of heat exhaustion may include muscle cramps; heavy sweating; cold, pale and clammy skin; dizziness; headache; nausea or vomiting; and fainting or passing out. If you think you or a loved one are experiencing heat exhaustion, you should stop physical activity move to a cool place -preferably air-conditioned, loosen clothing, and sip cool water. Seek medical attention immediately if you are throwing up, your symptoms get worse or symptoms last longer than one hour.

Signs of heat stroke may include high body temperature (103°F or higher); hot, red, dry or damp skin; fast, strong pulse; headache; dizziness; nausea; confusion; or loss of consciousness. If you think you or a loved one are experiencing heat stroke you should call 911 immediately. Heat stroke is a medical emergency. Move the person to a cool place—preferably air-conditioned. Help lower the person's body temperature with cool cloths or a cool bath until medical personnel arrive. Do not give the person anything to drink.

For more information regarding heat-related illness and prevention, visit the websites of [DHSS](#) or the [CDC](#).

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