



Notice

Number: 08-07

APPLICABLE TO:**DATE: June 23, 2008**

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Municipal & Private Non Profit
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Co-operatives
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Federal Non Profits
<input type="checkbox"/>	OCHAP/CSHP
<input type="checkbox"/>	Rent Supplement

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Mandatory
<input type="checkbox"/>	For Information

SUBJECT: Excessive Heat Alert

BACKGROUND

During the summer months, the Niagara region can experience prolonged periods of extreme heat, which can cause heat-related illnesses. It is important to be aware of who is at greatest risk and what actions can be taken to prevent a heat-related illness or death.

People at Risk

During a heat wave, everyone is at risk, but some are more susceptible than others. Those who are at greater risk are:

- ❖ Infants (under 1 year);
- ❖ People 65 years of age or older;
- ❖ People with chronic medical conditions (heart disease, respiratory conditions, diabetes, etc);
- ❖ People on certain types of medications (for high blood pressure, depression, insomnia, etc);
- ❖ Homeless people;
- ❖ People with limited mobility;
- ❖ Overweight people;
- ❖ People with mental impairment;
- ❖ People who exercise vigorously outdoors (play sports, cyclists, gardeners), or work outdoors;

Health Risks of Extreme Heat

Excessive heat can cause adverse health effects such as:

- ❖ *Heat cramps:* symptoms/signs include painful muscular cramps, usually in the legs or abdomen;
- ❖ *Heat exhaustion:* symptoms/signs include heavy sweating, weakness, dizziness, nausea, vomiting, fainting;

- ❖ *Heat stroke:* symptoms/signs include headache, dizziness, confusion or other altered mental state, fainting. Skin may be hot and dry, or the individual may be sweating due to high body temperature. This is a medical emergency that can prove fatal.
- ❖ Increases in other health problems can also be seen, especially for those with other chronic medical conditions such as heart conditions.

If you experience any of the above symptoms, you should consult a healthcare provider or call Telehealth Ontario (1-866-797-0000 or TTY at 1-877-797-0007). Attached as *Appendix A* is a chart describing heat-related conditions and symptoms.

Things You Can Do to Stay Cool & Minimize Heat Related Illnesses

- ❖ Drink plenty of water or natural fruit juices.
- ❖ Avoid beverages such as alcohol, coffee, tea or cola.
- ❖ Eat light, cool foods, and try to avoid using the oven or other hot appliances.
- ❖ Stay in air conditioned rooms, either at home, at a friend's place, or in public spaces such as malls, libraries, community centres or specially designated facilities. If outdoors, stay in the shade and avoid strenuous physical activities. Wear sun block and a hat.
- ❖ If you do not have air conditioning at home, open windows slightly but keep blinds closed during the day on the sunny side of your home. Keep indoor lights low or turned off.
- ❖ Check up on friends, family and/or neighbours regularly who may be at high risk during a heat event.

Protecting Children

Children have a high metabolic rate and therefore produce more heat. Also, their capacity to sweat is not as great, so it is more difficult for them to release heat. The affects of dehydration are greater in children. Never leave infants or young children in a parked car. Dress them in cool, loose clothing, and shade their heads and faces with hats or an umbrella. Ensure infants and children are protected with sunscreen. Children with diabetes, anorexia, obesity, developmental delays, cystic fibrosis, heart disease and diarrhoea are at an even greater risk.

Issuing an Excessive Heat Alert

The Ontario Ministry of the Environment and Environment Canada monitor elevated temperatures combined with the relative humidity. They jointly issue a Humidex Advisory when the Humidex reaches or exceeds 40 degrees Celsius. The following chart is a guide to summer comfort levels. The range is the Humidex level stated in degrees Celsius.

Less than 29	No discomfort
30 to 39	Some discomfort
40 to 45	Great discomfort, avoid exertion
46 to 54	Dangerous
Above 54	Heat stroke imminent

Niagara Region's Public Health Department will issue excessive heat alerts for the Niagara region. When received, NRH will, in turn, email or fax the heat alert to all housing providers.

IMPLEMENTATION

Service Manager's Role

When an excessive heat alert is issued by Niagara Region Public Health, NRH will, in turn, email or fax the alert to all housing providers.

Housing Provider's Role

Housing providers should take the following measures when an excessive heat alert is issued:

- ❖ Advise tenants/members of the excessive heat alert by posting the heat alert and safety information in the office or common area;
- ❖ Ensure that air-conditioning units in common rooms are working in order to provide relief for tenant/members who do not have air-conditioning in their units; and,
- ❖ Contact or check-in on vulnerable tenants/members to remind them of the things they can do to stay cool.

If you have any questions regarding this notice, please contact your Housing Administrator.

Lora Beckwith, General Manager

Attachment: Heat Related Conditions (summary chart)