

Red Sky at Night is Not Always a Sailor's Delight!

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What is a Heat Event?

- Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) issues a heat warning when:
 - the daytime temperature is 31°C or higher and the nighttime temperature is not cooler than 20°C for at least two days, or when the Humidex is 40°C for at least two days.
- When a heat warning is issued by ECCC, the Health Unit will issue a press release to the public and to partners offering information on individual cooling strategies and to check on the well being of friends and family.
- Some municipalities use heat warnings as a trigger to operate cooling centers in their community.



Why is Heat Dangerous to our Health?

- Becoming overheated can lead to dehydration, heat exhaustion, heat stroke and in some cases death.

Know the signs of heat illness:

- Nausea, dizziness, blurred vision
- Difficulty or rapid breathing
- Severe headache or confusion
- Convulsion
- Fever
- Extreme thirst, decreased urination that is unusually dark
- Changes in behaviour in children (sleepiness or temper tantrums)
- Unconsciousness



Who is at Risk of Heat Illness?

- Anyone can be affected by high temperatures and can become overheated.
- Some people are at higher risk including those who are:
 - Very young and older adults
 - Living with a chronic illness and on special medications for illness such as cardiovascular, pulmonary, renal, neurological disease, diabetes and those who are under nourished.
 - Living in buildings without air conditioning
 - Individuals who are socially and economically disadvantaged
 - Physically active or working outdoors

[Extreme Heat Events Guidelines: Technical Guide for Health Care Workers - Canada.ca](#)



Poor Outdoor Air Quality

- You will recall last summer a number of Special Air quality Statements (SAQS) issued for poor air quality due to the forest fires. Remember the red hazy skies.
- The purpose of these alerts is to advise people with breathing difficulties to avoid or reduce unnecessary exposure to the outdoor environment.
- They also inform industries that are major sources of pollution that they should consider, if possible, reducing their emissions.
- Both are issued jointly by Environment and Climate Change Canada and the Ontario Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks.
- The Health Units role is to help raise awareness of a SAQS when issued.
- We do this by promoting the information to the public through different media platforms and through our website.



How can Poor Air Quality Affect Health?

- Depending on the length of time you are exposed, your health status, your genetic background and the concentration of pollutants, air pollution can have a negative effect on your heart and lungs. It can:
 - Make it harder to breathe
 - Irritate your lungs and airways
 - Worsen chronic diseases such as heart disease, chronic bronchitis, emphysema and asthma
- Seniors are at higher risk because of weakening of the heart, lungs and immune system and increased likelihood of health problems such as heart and lung disease.
- Children are also more vulnerable to air pollution; they have less-developed respiratory and defense systems. Children also spend more time outdoors being physically active, which can increase their exposure to air pollution.
- People participating in sports or strenuous work outdoors breathe more deeply and rapidly, allowing more air pollution to enter their lungs. They may experience symptoms like eye, nose or throat irritation, cough or difficulty breathing when air pollution levels are high.
- Each person reacts differently to air pollution and negative health effects increase as air pollution worsens. Small increases in air pollution over a short period of time can increase symptoms for those at risk.



Air Quality Health Index

- Ontario Wildfire can be monitored
<https://www.ontario.ca/page/forest-fires>
- Air quality can be monitored:
 - <https://www.airqualityontario.com/aqhi/index.php>
- Sign Up: Air Quality Alert Email Notifications:
 - <https://www.airqualityontario.com/alerts/signup.ph>
- Information about heat and poor air quality can be found on our <https://healthunit.org/health-information/home-health-safety/>



Considerations for Municipalities

- Consider how prepared your community is to help protect residents on days of extreme heat and during a SAQS
- **Short-term actions:**
 - Communicate with residents about how to keep healthy during a heat event or during an SAQS- link to our website for information about heat and outdoor air quality
 - Consider providing services (e.g., cooling centre, transportation to cooling centre)
 - **Encourage the public to check on friends and family day and night to ensure their loved ones are comfortable and healthy.**
- **Longer-term actions:**
 - Add shade (trees, built shade structures) everywhere, add splash pads/wading pools in parks
 - Adding these community assets near where vulnerable (e.g., older adults, lower SES who may not have A/C) people live.
 - Consider adding air conditioning in municipally owned housing units or apartment building or have a common air conditioned space where residents can gain relief.
 - Creating a comprehensive communication plan to reach individuals who may be vulnerable (using a variety of methods: phone, in person, poster, radio, email distribution lists, social media/newsletter)

We encourage all municipalities to include heat events in their HIRA and in their emergency plans.



Questions?



Leeds, Grenville & Lanark District

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