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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: July 20, 2011

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LOCAL HEATWAVE RESPONSE PLAN ACTIVATED *Two Cooling Centers will Open Thursday 9:00 am – 6:00 pm*

YPSILANTI, MI., – Washtenaw County Public Health is among the local response partners monitoring the situation and providing official information. Health officials encourage all residents to take precautions to avoid heat-related illness. Two cooling centers will be open to the public on Thursday from 9:00 am to 6:00 pm. These centers will provide air conditioned space and water. Seniors, persons with disabilities or severe heat sensitive conditions may request free transportation to identified cooling centers by calling Emergency Management at 734-973-4900.

Cooling Centers Open from 9:00 am to 6:00 pm on Thursday, July 21st.

Washtenaw County Human Services, 555 Towner, Ypsilanti, Main floor (Room 107)
Washtenaw County Office Building, 200 North Main, Ann Arbor, Lower level
conference room

“Continued exposure to high temperatures can have a cumulative effect our bodies,” says Monique Reeves, MD, MPH, Washtenaw County Public Health’s Medical Director. “It’s increasingly important to be cautious when it remains hot for multiple days,” she continued.

Older persons, infants, children and persons with underlying health conditions or who take certain medications may be more sensitive to the hot conditions. Outdoor work or physical activity may increase the risk of illness. Public Health reminds everyone to stay hydrated, to cool off (even briefly) and to know the warning signs of severe heat-related illness. Seek immediate medical attention by calling 911 if heat-related illness is suspected.

LOCAL RESPONSE PLAN

The Washtenaw County Heatwave Community Response Plan has been activated. Current conditions are considered a Major Heat Wave. This is a Heat Advisory issued by the [National Weather Service](#) lasting four or more days or an Excessive Heat Warning lasting two days, but with no significant power outages. Washtenaw County Emergency Management, the American Red Cross, Public Health and local partners are monitoring the situation. Public Health is conducting surveillance of heat-related illnesses and will issue public information through the media, as needed. For official updates, visit <http://publichealth.ewashtenaw.org>, call 211 or listen to WEMU 89.1.

Hot Weather and Health Survey

Public Health is currently conducting a community survey about our readiness for extreme heat or other health emergencies. Visit www.ewashtenaw.org/heat to provide input about our local emergency response services.

PREVENTION

Avoid Heat-Related Illness

Heat illness can occur when the body is unable to cool down. The body normally cools down by sweating. During extremely hot weather, sweating may not be enough to cool the body.

- Use an air conditioner or go to a cooler place. Spending even a few hours a day in air conditioning can reduce your risk for heat-related illness.
- Drink extra water to stay hydrated. Avoid beverages that contain caffeine or alcohol.
- Take a cool shower or bath.
- Avoid outdoor exercise and physical activity during the hottest part of the day. Or, reduce or eliminate any outdoor activities during a heat wave.
- Stay out of the sun. If you must be in the sun, wear thin and light-colored clothing, a hat and sunglasses. Wear sunscreen and reapply every two hours.
- Check on family members, neighbors and friends daily. Help them move them to a cool place if necessary.
- Never leave children, older adults or pets in parked vehicles. Vehicles heat up very quickly and can become dangerous, even with the windows open.

Dehydration

Dehydration is the first stage of heat-related illness. Dehydration occurs when body fluids are lost, and not replaced, by sweating. Symptoms include dry mouth, thirst, headache, dizziness, cramps, excessive fatigue and irritability.

If you are experiencing dehydration, move to a shaded or air-conditioned area, replace fluids by drinking water and consult a physician if symptoms persist or if there is an existing condition that could be complicated by increased fluid intake.

Heat Exhaustion

The next, more serious stage of heat-related illness is heat exhaustion. Heat exhaustion typically occurs when people exercise heavily or work in a warm, humid place where body fluids are lost by sweating. This fluid loss can cause reduced blood flow to vital organs, which results in shock.

Signs of heat exhaustion include headache, moist and pale skin, nausea, dizziness, weakness and exhaustion. To treat exhaustion, seek shade or a cool place. Drink a half glass of cool water every 15 minutes, remove or loosen any tight clothing and apply a cool, wet towel or compress. Heat exhaustion can develop into heat stroke. If symptoms persist or worsen, seek immediate medical treatment.

Heat Stroke

Heat stroke is the most severe stage of heat-related illness. A heat stroke, or sunstroke, can be deadly. Symptoms include vomiting, decreased alertness or loss of consciousness, high body temperature (sometimes as high as 105 degrees Fahrenheit) or red, hot, and dry skin with a rapid, weak pulse.

Call 911 for immediate medical help and try to cool the person down. If possible, put them in a tub of cool water or shower them with a garden hose.

Washtenaw County Public Health promotes health and works to prevent disease or injury in our community. Visit us online at <http://publichealth.ewashtenaw.org>. The Public Health Emergency Preparedness program maintains local response plans for health threats; coordinates with community response partners; and provides public information and training. Contact Susan Cerniglia, MPH, at 734-544-6759 or ringlers@ewashtenaw.org or Cindra James, Public Health Preparedness Administrator at 734-544-2979 or jamesc@ewashtenaw.org for more information.

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