

The Heat Is (Still) On

Summer in the St. Louis region consists of leisurely afternoons at baseball games, strolls in Forest Park and countless backyard barbeques and picnics. But these fun, summer staples are typically accompanied by another St. Louis tradition: the infamous St. Louis heat and humidity. While recent, unseasonably mild temperatures may have many lowering their guard, this region is known for sweltering summer days and equally unforgiving nights. And it's important to adjust your routine to cope with the rising temperatures.

To ensure that everyone may enjoy their remaining summer activities through what may turn into the all-too-familiar typical August days of sweltering heat and sticky humidity, All Ready has a few important reminders and tips for you to consider...

Beat the Heat: Staying Cool in Summer's Sweltering Months

A Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [study](#) shows that 650 heat stroke deaths each year can be prevented. Those who are most affected are young children, the elderly and people who spend a substantial amount of time outdoors, such as athletes and laborers. To ensure the safety of friends and family, check on elderly neighbors frequently, and make sure children are prepared for summer camps and practices with an insulated water bottle. For friends or neighbors with disabilities, ensure that they are provided with adequate amounts of drinking water and a way to cool down in high temperatures. Offering to run errands, set up a fan or provide them with a water bottle can help decrease their risk of dehydration and making plans for these heat-related emergencies before the next heat wave strikes can have a life-saving impact.

To prevent unfortunate incidents of heat stroke and heat exhaustion, the CDC recommends taking frequent breaks from the heat and humidity during the day. Schedule activities near facilities with air conditioning, drink enough water to rehydrate and take frequent cool showers or baths to help regulate body temperature. These practices still hold true in the evening, when the absence of the sun only offers mild relief. If air conditioning is unavailable, sleep with a fan or cooling pillow to help lower your risk of becoming overheated.

To recognize the signs of heat stroke or heat exhaustion, be mindful of loved ones, neighbors, pets and service animals for signs of nausea, cramping, vomiting and difficulty breathing, especially during intense periods of heat. If you notice any of these signs, relocate the person or animal to a cool area and encourage them to consume water. If symptoms persist, seek medical attention.

Pets and service animals play an important role in our family life and daily activities. Consider their safety needs by preparing a pet emergency kit with food, water, medicine, a pet first-aid kit and a few toys to keep them engaged during an emergency. Additionally, place an ASPCA [Rescue Alert Sticker](#) on a visible surface outside to let rescue workers know how many and what types of pets occupy the residence. Include the name of your veterinarian and your veterinarian's



phone number on the sticker, and note if you or your pets have evacuated by writing “Evacuated” across the sticker during an emergency.

Look Before You Lock

Keeping family members, animals and even groceries in the car for just a short period of time can have dangerous and potentially fatal consequences. Small children, the elderly and animals aren’t able to cool their bodies as well as functioning adults. They quickly become dehydrated, overheated and exhausted in minutes if left in a car parking lot, even with the windows rolled down. On days with particularly high heat indexes, the temperature inside a car can spike twenty degrees in just ten minutes! This can prove to be fatal for anyone left inside a car without air.

Just this past month, a [one-year-old child in Fresno, California](#), suffocated inside an overheated car after being locked inside for an hour. The parents were preoccupied with other children, groceries, errands and daily distractions to check whether everyone was safely removed from the vehicle.

For friends or family members with disabilities, prevent heat stroke and heat exhaustion by helping them perform their daily tasks in the morning or evening when the temperature is cooler. Don’t leave persons with disabilities or service animals in the car, even if it’s just a quick errand. They may be unable to ask for assistance, which could prove fatal.

It’s important to always “Look before you lock,” to ensure that everything of value has been removed from the vehicle before proceeding indoors.

Keep the H₂O Handy

We all know to “drink when thirsty,” but it’s often unclear how much water we should carry with us throughout the day and when to consume it. According to [Debby Krzesni](#), a registered dietitian, one in three older adults has a dangerously low intake of fluid. This can be especially harmful in the summer months, and lead to uncomfortable side effects due to dehydration. For elderly adults, the thirst sensation that signals dehydration is depressed due to age, medication and physical impairments. Older adults may not recognize the need to hydrate throughout the day, which can become dangerous in the sweltering summer months. Caregivers and family members should pay attention to the amount of liquid their loved ones consume and make sure they are hydrating properly.

The same principle holds true for young children and those with cognitive disabilities who are often unable to see to their own needs and must rely on a parent or caregiver. Recognizing that these individuals might be thirsty after playing outside, in a heated room or even at the pool can help prevent some of the negative symptoms associated with dehydration. Carrying a water bottle for yourself and anyone you care for may come in handy as you enjoy outdoor activities.

Preparedness Spotlight

Community Emergency Response Team (CERT)

There are Community Emergency Response Teams (CERTs) all over Missouri, Illinois and the greater United States. CERT is made up of 2,200 registered teams of volunteers who assist law enforcement in any number of community emergencies. And these active citizens are making a big difference all across the St. Louis area. In Missouri, a St. Charles County teen CERT member safely [rescued an elderly woman from a fire](#).

CERT offers a 20-30 hour comprehensive training course that covers the subject of disaster preparedness through fire safety, psychology and basic medical assistance. Participants learn how to prevent and manage emergencies and their potentially disastrous aftermath so that they can provide support to professional responders when necessary.

These exceptional teams of community volunteers are a perfect example of how you can take the message of personal preparedness and share it, making a difference in your community. If you would like more information about how to get involved with a Community Emergency Response Team in your area, visit [fema.gov/community-emergency-response-teams](https://www.fema.gov/community-emergency-response-teams).

Did you know...?

Dehydration: Myth vs. Fact

MYTH: Everyone should drink 8 glasses of water per day.

FACT: The Institute of Medicine recommends that men drink roughly 3 liters of liquid per day to stay hydrated, while women are recommended to intake 2.2 liters of liquid.

Hydration doesn't just come from the water you drink; about 20 percent of the average person's water intake comes from the food they consume throughout the day. Fruits and vegetables are especially high in water content, so stocking up on snacks like these will keep your hydration levels high through the most intense periods of summer heat. The amount of water your body requires depends on your sex, age, height, weight and lifestyle. If you exercise frequently, particularly outside, the more water you should drink.

MYTH: Everyone has access to unlimited amounts of drinking water.

FACT: Oftentimes, you are a caregiver and may not realize it.

While you should be responsible for replenishing your own water and electrolyte stores, you may also have a responsibility to others in your home. Namely, pets and service animals. With the increased heat of the summer months, animals also require more water than usual to remain healthy and hydrated. To check if an animal is suffering from dehydration, look for sunken eyes, exhaustion or dry mouth. Try and tempt them with food and see if they respond normally – animals that are dehydrated suffer from loss of appetite. If you are really concerned, take them to the vet for a dehydration blood test to see if hydration levels are normal.

Another consideration may be a friend or neighbor living with a disability. Establish a "check-in" plan with friends living with a disability to ensure that they have access to adequate amounts of drinking water and are replenishing frequently. This is especially necessary for those who live without air conditioning or have difficulty cooling their bodies in the heat.

Providing this simple service can help lessen their chance of dealing with dehydration issues.

Seasonal Overview

Just this summer, the St. Louis area was declared in a “[state of emergency](#)” by the governor for damaging winds and heavy rain that tore across the Midwest. As tornado season gives way to heat lightning and summer showers, create a preparedness plan with family and neighbors in the event of a summer storm.

Summer Storms

Late-summer storms can do more than dampen a picnic. They can cause harmful and costly damage to your home, property or family. When preparing to spend lazy afternoons outside at barbecues and parties, it’s important to prepare for Mother Nature’s weather mood swings by devising a summer storm preparedness plan.

Summer storms are typically a product of rapidly rising warm air, which is more prevalent in the hot summer climate. These damaging bursts of rain and lightning can have long-term consequences. Falling branches, downed power lines and damage to your home can leave lasting effects. If weather reports indicate that a storm is coming your way, here are some things you can do to prepare:

- Inspect your house for drainage issues before the storm occurs. You don’t want to discover a faulty drainage system after you’ve already flooded!
- Keep an eye on nearby trees and overhanging branches. A heavy downpour can stress tree limbs that are located near your home and cause them to break.
- One thing you can expect with any spring or summer thunderstorm is power loss. First, turn off and unplug all appliances that you were using when the power went out. Turn out all of the lights but one so that you can tell when the power comes back on. If you rely on any batteries or electric powered machines, such as motorized wheelchairs or ventilators, pack extra batteries in your emergency kit.
- Don’t have access to a generator? Seek out Red Cross emergency shelters to use generators to recharge important batteries.
- Establish a plan with friends or neighbors with disabilities to ensure they are located in a safe place with adequate food and water during these frequent summer storms. Have a system in place so you are prepared to assist them if their house or property is damaged in a storm.
- Make sure to provide shelter for animals, especially service pets, during harsh weather conditions and provide them with plenty of food and water – just as you would for a family member.

Taking proper precautionary measures will reduce the chance of summer storm damage. These safety guidelines will ensure that summer storms only ruin a picnic, not a home.

You can be ready for anything. To learn more about other types of emergencies and the appropriate response actions, visit the [All Ready website](#) where you can find multiple resources and in-depth information on several types of potential disasters.

Using the website to evaluate your home in preparation for a summer storm, ensuring that your loved ones are prepared for the outdoors with an adequate water supply and creating a “check-in” system with elderly neighbors, friends and those living with disabilities, you will be prepared to experience all that the St. Louis region has to offer in the upcoming summer months. Grab a water bottle and a cooling fan and enjoy the weather – responsibly.

Want to share the All Ready newsletter with family and friends? Feel free to forward on to share updates on emergency preparedness information and activities in the St. Louis area.

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