

Heat Emergency Plan 2024



**Delaware County Office of
Services for the Aging**

PURPOSE

Persons aged 60 and older are at a greater risk for heat related illnesses during a heat crisis. To help prevent serious illness due to heat related illnesses, the Delaware County Office of Services for the Aging (COSA) has developed a Heat Emergency Plan and will act as the focal point of their communities for aging programs and services. This county-based heat wave preparedness plan targets persons aged 60 and older who are considered most at risk for heat related illness. A twenty-four-hour emergency heat information line will be activated during the summer months beginning June 1 through September 30 annually. This information line will provide weekly heat safety tips and reminders, emergency information and locations where persons can cool off, especially during a heat crisis.

Criteria for Identifying Persons at Risk

Persons can be considered at risk if the following conditions exist:

1. Their physical condition makes them less able to handle heat stress which will include persons with chronic illness and who are over/underweight.
2. They are not able to easily control their environment, which will include dependent persons, urban dwellers, and those who are low income.
3. They are more difficult to reach through ordinary communication channels (live alone, homeless, non-English speaking, illiterate, culturally/socially isolated).
4. No air conditioning in the home and/or no time spent in air conditioning outside the home.
5. Failure to reduce activity and/or increase fluid intake during periods of high heat.
6. Use of medicines and/alcohol.
7. Living on second or third floor of a non-air-conditioned building.

Heat Plan Coordination

Coordination and updating of the annual heat plan.

- Maintaining the emergency heat information line.
- Notifying heat plan participants of significant changes in the heat index status based on the National Weather Service's criteria.
- Assuring responses during a heat crisis are carried out and that the needs of "at risk" consumers are addressed.
- Annually provide the Pennsylvania Department of Aging Emergency Management Liaison with a copy of the heat plan.
- Providing heat intervention updates to the Emergency Management Liaison when requested during an excessive heat crisis.
- Providing written information for consumers as requested.
- Disseminate to all COSA sponsored senior centers informational flyers addressing heat related issues and safety interventions.
- Provide community based educational programs and written information on heat safety issues when requested.

Senior Center Responsibilities during a Heat Crisis

All COSA sponsored senior centers will participate in the heat plan. The center director will be responsible for:

- Providing educational sessions throughout the summer months on heat related topics with a focus on its impact on older adults. Daily reminders are encouraged, especially during a heat crisis.
- Providing daily safety reminders, especially during a heat crisis, to help decrease the risk of heat related disease.
- Providing informational flyers to their in-home clients to remind them and their caregiver of heat related issues and safety interventions.
- Maintaining pitchers of cold ice water or other non-caffeinated beverages on the tables throughout the day to reinforce the practice of taking cool liquids frequently to prevent dehydration.
- Reinforcing with homebound drivers the need to check with consumers to ensure they have adequate cool water available and that their home has adequate ventilation. Drivers are to report to the meal supervisor any consumers they believe to be at risk
- Identifying members who they feel may be at risk, contact them to determine their status, and help solve problems.
- Reminding caregivers about safety issues involving the heat and the effects of heat on the elderly.
- Determining if extended hours can be provided during a heat crisis at their center.
- Determining if the center will be open with extended hours on an as needed basis
- Notifying consumers who receive home delivered meals of any change in the normal meal delivery schedule.

Long Term Services & Supports Responsibilities during a Heat Crisis

Supervisors, care managers, and assessors will:

- Review their caseload to identify consumers identified “at risk” using the following long-term services and supports criteria as a guide. A consumer will be considered “at risk” if they:
 1. Have limited, nonexistent, or inconsistent informal supports.
 2. Have no phone.
 3. Are home or bedbound.
 4. Live alone or with other frail or disabled persons.
 5. Have a history of mental or cognitive impairment.
 6. Have a prior history of problems with inadequate heating or cooling for the home.
 7. Have limited financial resources.
 8. Have health needs that require the utilization of medical equipment using electricity.

- A list of “at risk” consumers will be developed and be available at all times to the supervisor and care manager. This list should be updated at least monthly and should contain the following consumer information.
 1. Name
 2. Address
 3. Telephone number
 4. Emergency contact and telephone number
 5. Primary Care Physician

- A list of “at risk” consumers will be provided to COSA’s Program Director of Home and Community Based Services.

The supervisor will communicate any necessary information to the staff throughout the crisis. It will be the supervisor’s responsibility to assure that consumers are contacted on the weekend or holiday.

The care managers will call their consumers or their emergency contacts on the list to determine their status and to help solve problems.

If a problem is identified which cannot be resolved over the phone, they should contact COSA’s emergency on-call number or the police, depending on the situation.

Standard Heat Index Crisis Criteria and Responses

During periods of prolonged heat, the Heat Plan Coordinator will identify the heat index stage and notify all participants of the appropriate responses to minimize adverse effects from the heat. The same notification will be posted on the Heat Emergency Information line along with heat safety guidelines and other pertinent information for consumers.

The **Weather Information Line can be reached at (610) 872-1558**, twenty-four hours a day, and will be in effect from June 1 through September 30. Updates will be provided on a weekly basis and more frequently during a heat emergency.

Note: All temperatures are based on the heat index listings.

<See “Standard Heat Index Crisis Criteria and Responses” table on next page>

Standard Heat Index Crisis Criteria and Responses

| Category | Criteria | Participant Response |
|-------------------------------------|--|--|
| Advisory | Daytime heat index to reach 105°F or greater, for less than 3 hours and night lows remain greater than 80°F, for two consecutive days | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All participants will reinforce educational components of heat & its effects on older adult • Encourage hourly fluid intake or at the discretion of the physician |
| Stage I – Heat Watch | Daytime heat index high of 105°F is expected for greater than three hours/day for two consecutive days, or daytime high expected to be greater than 115°F for any length of time | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same as above • Encourage use of fans and air conditioners for homebound • Encourage dressing in cool natural fiber clothing |
| Stage II – Heat Warning | Anytime above criteria is exceeded | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same as above • Activate extended hours for participants and In-home program client follow-up |
| Stage III – Excessive Heat Warning | Upon recommendation from the Heat Task Force members in the State Emergency Operations Center | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same as above • Implement any state directed recommendations |
| Excessive Heat Outlook-Be Aware! | Issued when the potential exists for an excessive heat event in the next 3-7 days. An Outlook provides information to those who need considerable lead-time to prepare for the event. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All participants will reinforce educational components of heat & its effects on older adults |
| Excessive Heat Watch-Be Prepared! | Issued when conditions are favorable for an excessive heat event in the next 24-72 hours. A Watch is used when the risk of a heat wave has increased but its occurrence and timing are still uncertain. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same as above |
| Heat Advisory-Take Action! | Is issued within 12 hrs. of the onset of extremely dangerous heat conditions. The general rule of thumb is when maximum heat index is expected to be 100 degrees or higher for at least 2 days and night time air temperatures will not drop below 75 degrees. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same as above • Encourage use of fans and air conditioners for the homebound • Encourage dressing in cool natural fiber clothing • Encourage hourly fluid intake or at the discretion of the physician • Identify and check on at-risk consumers |
| Excessive Heat Warning-Take Action! | Is issued within 12 hrs. of event. Maximum heat index is expected to be 105 degrees or higher for at least two days and nighttime air temperatures will not drop below 75 degrees. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same as above • Activate extended hours for participants • Implement any state directed recommendations |