CSC
CIVIC SAFETY CHAIN
"Courage, Commitment, Compassion" NEIGHBORHOOD NEWSLETTER June 2009, Vol. 3
Produced by the Houston Fire Department Public Affairs Office • 500 Jefferson • 16th Floor • Houston, Texas 77002

SUMMER SAFETY

IT'S HOT & GETTING HOTTER!

Welcome to summer in Houston, Texas.

In this time of severe heat, the Houston Fire Department would like to take this opportunity to remind you that during these sweltering summer months, when the temperature reaches into the triple digits, there are steps you can take to help keep you and your family cool and safe from heat exhaustion and other heat related illnesses.

TIPS TO KEEP YOU COOL THIS SUMMER

Summer in Houston is especially hard on the elderly and low income families who are afraid they cannot afford higher electric bills. Although many have air conditioners, they leave them off to save money. This can save money but the severe build up of heat in the home can also kill.

Contact your electricity provider to discuss possible payment plans. Many providers will allow the payments covering the extra high costs to be deferred until September. These providers can set up an easy payment installment plan that will allow you to pay off the excessive costs over time. Therefore you can continue to use your air conditioner without fear of disconnection.

Another option available to you in an effort to keep cool this summer is to visit the new **"Beat the Heat" Centers** sponsored by Reliant Energy. These centers are designed to provide a cool place for people to visit during the hottest parts of the day. Each 'Beat the Heat" Center will include adult and youth games, snacks, water and entertainment.

These centers will operate from **June 22 through October 2, 2009**, **Monday through Friday from 9:00am-5:00pm** at the following area multi-service centers:

- **Acres Homes MCS**
  6719 W. Montgomery Road
- **Denver Harbor MSC**
  6402 Market Street
- **Fifth Ward MSC**
  4014 Market Street
- **Magnolia MSC**
  7037 Capital Street
- **Northeast MSC**
  9720 Spaulding Street
- **Southwest MSC**
  6400 High Star Drive
- **Sunnyside MSC**
  4605 Wilmington Street
- **West End MSC**
  170 Heights Blvd.

Free transportation to these centers can also be provided. For more information on the Reliant Energy "Beat the Heat" Centers or to schedule free transportation, call 713-497-2711.

STAY INSIDE IF POSSIBLE

It is recommended that you stay inside in an air conditioned home or other facility as much as possible during these extremely hot summer months. Other than the "Beat the Heat" Centers, there are other types of facilities you can visit that you might not think of. These are:

- Movie theaters
- Shopping malls
- Libraries
- Neighborhood multi-service centers

It is advised to limit your outdoor activity, if possible, to early morning or evening when it is cooler. If you must be outdoors during the day and are unaccustomed to the sever heat, start slowly and gradually build up your tolerance to the heat over the next several weeks.

KNOW THE SIGNS OF HEAT STROKE

Q. What is the difference between heat exhaustion and heat stroke?

A. Heat Exhaustion is your body reacting to the excessive loss of water and salt contained in your sweat. Heat exhaustion is usually associated with heavy activity or exertion. Symptoms of heat exhaustion include:

- **Profuse sweating**
- **Paleness**
- **Muscle cramps**
- **Weakness**
- **Dizziness**
- **Headache**
- **Nausea**
- **Vomiting**
- **Weak but rapid pulse**
- **Fainting**
- **Cool, moist skin**

If left untreated, heat exhaustion can lead to heat stroke.

Heat Stroke occurs when the body's temperature rises rapidly and is unable to cool down due to the failure of the sweating system. Body temperature may rise to 106° or higher within 10 minutes which can cause permanent disability like brain damage, organ failure or even death if emergency treatment is not provided. Heat stroke symptoms include:

- **Extemely high body temperature** (above 103°F orally)
- **Red, hot, dry skin**
- **No sweating**
- **Very rapid, strong pulse**
- **Throbbing headache**
- **Dizziness**
- **Nausea**
- **Confusion**
- **Unconsciousness**

The elderly, children up to four years of age, those who are overweight or suffering form respiratory or heart conditions are particularly vulnerable to to heat stroke and heat exhaustion.

MORE YOU CAN DO TO AVOID HEAT RELATED ILLNESSES

- Pay attention to the weather advisories
- Drink plenty of water or electrolyte replacement beverages
- Avoid drinks that contain caffeine, alcohol or large amounts of sugar. These drinks can result in dehydration by allowing the body to lose a large amount of fluids.
- Take frequent breaks in the shade or an air conditioned facility when working or exercising outside.
- Wear lightweight, light-colored, loose-fitting clothing that permits the evaporation of perspiration. Also wear a wide-brimmed, loose-fitting hat that allows ventilation and helps protect from sunburn.
- Take cool showers or baths during the day. Or visit your neighborhood pool for a cool swim.
- If you know of an elderly person that might be at risk for a heat related illness, visit them on a regular basis during these hot months or have a friend or relative stop by and check on them.

THINGS TO REMEMBER!

1. NEVER, under any circumstances, leave a child, senior citizen or pet unattended in a vehicle.

Temperatures in a sealed car can reach deadly levels in a just a few minutes. To help you remember who may be in the back seat, place a reminder such as a stuffed animal, article of clothing or a dog toy in the front seat so it can be visible when you exit the vehicle.

2. Electric Fans:

Although electric fans may provide some comfort, when the temperatures reach into the 90's, these fans are only circulating hot, humid air which can accelerate body heating and raise the internal body temperature. This can lead to heat stroke and death. You must use air condtioners that circulate refrigerated air to maintain a cool body temperature.

3. Air Conditioners:

Have a certified professional inspect your air conditioning system every year, before the hot summer months begin, to assure you that you will be cool and comfortable all summer long.

4. Pets:

If possible, leave your pets inside during the day. If you have to leave your pets outdoors, makes sure they have plenty of shade and water.

For more information please visit: **www.houstonfire.org** or the City of Houston's Health and Human Services website: **http://www.houstontx.gov/health/index.html**

From June 1 - 22, 2009, HFD had already responded to 68 temperature related calls, compared to 55 during the same time period last year. At least one death has also been reported due to heat this year.

Already this year in Texas, over 50 people, 17 of them children in just the Houston area, have drown.

Although a majority of the incidents happen backyard and apartment pools, they are not limited to just these areas. Many deaths this year have occurred in bayous, lakes, bathtubs, hot tubs, ponds and other bodies of water.

Water Safety Is Not Just For The Summer!

If you or your children plan to be around the water, these safety tips can prevent a tragedy from happening to your family.

1. **NEVER** leave children alone near water
2. **ALWAYS** watch your children around **ANY** body of water
3. **EVERYONE** in your family needs to learn to swim but remember, swim lessons don't make your child "Drown Proof". Take lessons from certified instructors. Swim lessons can begin as early as 1 year.
4. **NEVER** consume alcohol around the water. Even if you don't swim, being impaired by alcohol will lower your awareness and response and may lead to tragedy if there are children in the water.
5. Use approved flotation devices
6. Bring a cell phone to the pool in case of emergency
7. Pay attention to local weather conditions. If thunderstorms are in the area, get out of the water until the system has passed.
8. **LEARN CPR!**
9. Teach your kids to:
   - Swim with a buddy
   - Don't dive into unknown bodies of water. Always enter feet first to avoid hitting your head on the shallow bottom.
   - Swim in supervised areas only
   - Obey all rules and posted signs and no horseplay or running in or around the pools

If You Own A Pool

Install a security fence around your pool area of at least 4 feet in height. Make sure the fence has a spring-operated, self closing gate with a working locking latch.

Store all pool chemicals out of the reach of children.

If Your Apartment Has A Pool

If your apartment has a pool, inspect the fence and gate. If the gate does not lock or you find any other defects with the fence, report it to the apartment management immediately.

IN THE BLINK OF AN EYE, A CHILD CAN DROWN.

BURN BAN ISSUED FOR HARRIS COUNTY

Due to the extremely hot, dry conditions in the area, Harris County officials have issued a burn ban. For details on the ban, please visit www.houstonfire.org.

ARE ILLEGAL IN THE CITY OF HOUSTON

The Houston Fire Department reminds citizens that it is illegal to discharge fireworks or to have fireworks in your possession in the City of Houston. Harris County residents should also be aware that HFD will be enforcing the fireworks ban in the Limited Purpose Annexation areas. **The fines are anywhere from $500 - $2000 for each individual firework.** Each case is different and it would be up to a judge to determine the exact amount. Warnings are no longer used because of the seriousness of the firework laws.

There are inspectors and investigators from the Fire Marshal's office who patrol the City starting 10 days before the new year and the 4th of July to remind people of the laws and to answer questions. If there are any fireworks found, they will be confiscated.

If a minor is caught with fireworks, the parent or guardian will receive the fine even if they were unaware of the minor's possession and/or usage.

Citizens should report all complaints regarding the illegal use of fireworks directly to the HPD Tel-communicator (non-emergency line) at 713-884-3131. If the citizen believes that there may be a fire and/or medical emergency related to the use of fireworks, he/she should dial 9-1-1 and request the HFD.

Take Care of Your Loved Ones.

get your kids ready for school with FREE immunizations!

2009 FREE IMMUNIZATIONS FALL SCHEDULE

The Houston Fire Department in partnership with the Blue Cross Blue Shield Care-Van offers free childhood immunizations throughout the year a various fire stations around the Houston area.

Bring your child to a fire station on the dates listed below between 4 p.m. and 7 p.m. to receive their free childhood immunizations.

You must present a valid id and your child's current immunization records.

Date	Fire Station	Address
Aug. 6	51	6902 Bellaire Blvd.
Aug. 20	11	460 T.C. Jester
Sept. 3	29	4831 Galveston Road
Sept. 17	59	13925 S. Post Oak
Oct. 1	44	675 Maxey Road
Oct. 15	70	11410 Beamer Road
Nov. 5	76	7100 Cook Road
Nov. 19	32	8614 Tidwell Road

Working Smoke Detectors SAVE LIVES!

CSC
CIVIC SAFETY CHAIN

If you or your organization would like to receive our free Civic Safety Chain Newsletter and other e-mail updates, please visit our website: **www.houstonfire.org.** To register click on the Civic Safety Chain link.

www.houstonfire.org

If your organization, community association, school or business would like to schedule a tour of a fire station, a fire truck visit or speaker please visit our website at **www.houstonfire.org**.

To schedule your event look for the fire truck and click the "**Read More**" link.

The Houston Fire Department requires at least 30 days notice prior to your event for scheduling so book your event early as possible.

Our website also contains more fire and life safety tips, current HFD events and so much more so please visit today!

"ADOPT-A-FIRE STATION"

The "**Adopt-A-Fire Station**" Program was created to give citizens and civic, professional and business groups a formal vehicle by which they may make tangible donations to the fire stations of their choice.

The program, jointly administered by the Houston Fire Department and the General Services Department, involves directing donor materials and services to the fire station the donor desires "to adopt." The program does not replace the city's established fire station restoration program currently administered by the General Services Department. Rather, it serves as a supplement.

For more information please visit: http://www.houstontx.gov/fire/community/adopt.html or call 713-495-7906

HFD First Aid Tip of the Month "HEAT EXHAUSTION"

Heat Exhaustion is caused by over exposure to high temperatures usually combined with high humidity and strenuous physical activity. If not treated immediately, heat exhaustion can lead to heat stroke which can cause organ failure, brain damage and death.

In most cases, you can treat heat exhaustion yourself by following the tips listed here.

1. Rest in a cool place. Getting into an air-conditioned building is best, but at the least, find a shady spot. Rest on your back with your legs elevated higher than your heart level.

2. Drink cool fluids. Stick to water or sports drinks. Don't drink any beverages that have alcohol or caffeine, either of which can contribute to fluid loss.

3. Apply cool water to your skin. If possible, take a cool shower or soak in a cool bath. Don't use alcohol on your skin.

4. Loosen clothing. Remove any unnecessary clothing and make sure your clothes aren't binding.

If you don't begin to feel better within a half-hour using these treatment measures, seek prompt medical attention. You may be given intravenous (IV) fluids to help you rehydrate. Immersion in cold water, misting your skin, and placing you in front of fans or using cold or ice packs and cooling blankets are some of the techniques that may be used to bring down your body temperature.

Source: www.mayoclinic.com