CSC
CIVIC SAFETY CHAIN
"Courage, Commitment, Compassion" NEIGHBORHOOD NEWSLETTER June 2010
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.

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. 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 severe heat, start slowly and gradually build up your tolerance to the heat over the next several weeks.

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 conditioners 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

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:

- **Extremely 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.

The Houston Fire Department would like to remind parents that we are here to help keep kids safe.

Just as there is a church in every neighborhood to support it's residents, there is a fire house nearby when someone feels threatened by a stranger, friend or family member. All Fire Stations are "Safe Havens," places for both children and adults to come to if they feel they are in immediate danger (such as being followed by another person or vehicle).

Houston Firefighters will make sure the person is okay and contact the local authorities. We encourage parents to tell children that this is a "safe" place they can go to if they are lost or feel they are in danger from a family member, friend or stranger. The firefighters will keep them safe until the parents and police can assist the child.

Parents and guardians should teach their children that strangers are not only people that they have never met, but can be people they don't know too well. Even if they recognize the person from down the street or from the corner store, the person can still be a stranger who means them harm. Also, every child should know how to call 9-1-1 and ask for help.

Children should have several safe refuges they can turn to besides a fire station such as a neighbor you trust, a business that you are familiar with or a police station.

Know the signs of Heat Stroke, keep cool and keep hydrated.

Look for more tips on Page 4 in the First Aid Tip of The Month.

SEVERE WEATHER SEASON IS HERE!: Are You Prepared For A Weather Emergency ?

If we have learned anything from living in southeast Texas, it is to be prepared for dramatic weather changes that can occur at any time.

HOUSTON AREA FLOODPLAINS- DO YOU KNOW YOURS?

There are five major floodplain scenarios that occur in the Houston area. Which affects you? For a complete description of floodplains and a map of the Houston area floodplains please visit: **http://maps2.tsarp.org/tsarp/**

KNOW YOUR EVACUATION ZONE:

During a major weather event like a hurricane, you may be asked to evacuate your area using a zip code zone system. This system was set up to alleviate the massive traffic issues we experienced during Hurricane Rita by allowing a gradual and organized evacuation from the coastal areas inland.

HURRICANE/DISASTER PREPAREDNESS-

Prepare Your Family and Home

- Discuss what your family should do when a hurricane comes ashore or other severe weather is in your area and where you might evacuate to (shelter, hotel etc.).
- Don't forget about your pets. Many shelters will not take pets, so plan in advance what to do with them.
- Know and review your evacuation routes & never drive through high water
- Develop a family communication plan. Identify a relative or friend in another state or city to serve as a contact in case family members are separated.
- Prepare a disaster kit and place it in a portable container in case of evacuation
- Be sure trees and shrubs are well trimmed.
- Tape does not prevent windows from breaking. Install permanent storm shutters or use 5/8" marine plywood, cut to fit, over your windows.
- If possible, place patio furniture, plants and all other outdoor objects indoors, out of the wind.
- Make sure your car has a full tank of gas in case you have to evacuate with little notice.

DISASTER SUPPLIES KIT

Shelter-in-Place in an Emergency: There are six basics you should stock for your home: 3-day supply of water and food for each person, first aid supplies, clothing and bedding, tools and emergency supplies, and special items. Keep the items that you would most likely need during an evacuation in an easy-to carry container.

- Store your kit in a convenient place known to all family members. Keep a smaller version of the supplies kit in the trunk of your car.
- Keep items in airtight plastic bags. Change your stored water supply every six months so it stays fresh. Replace your stored food every six months.
- Re-think your kit and family needs at least once a year. Replace batteries, update clothes, etc.
- Ask your physician or pharmacist about storing prescription medications.

IMPORTANT FAMILY DOCUMENTS

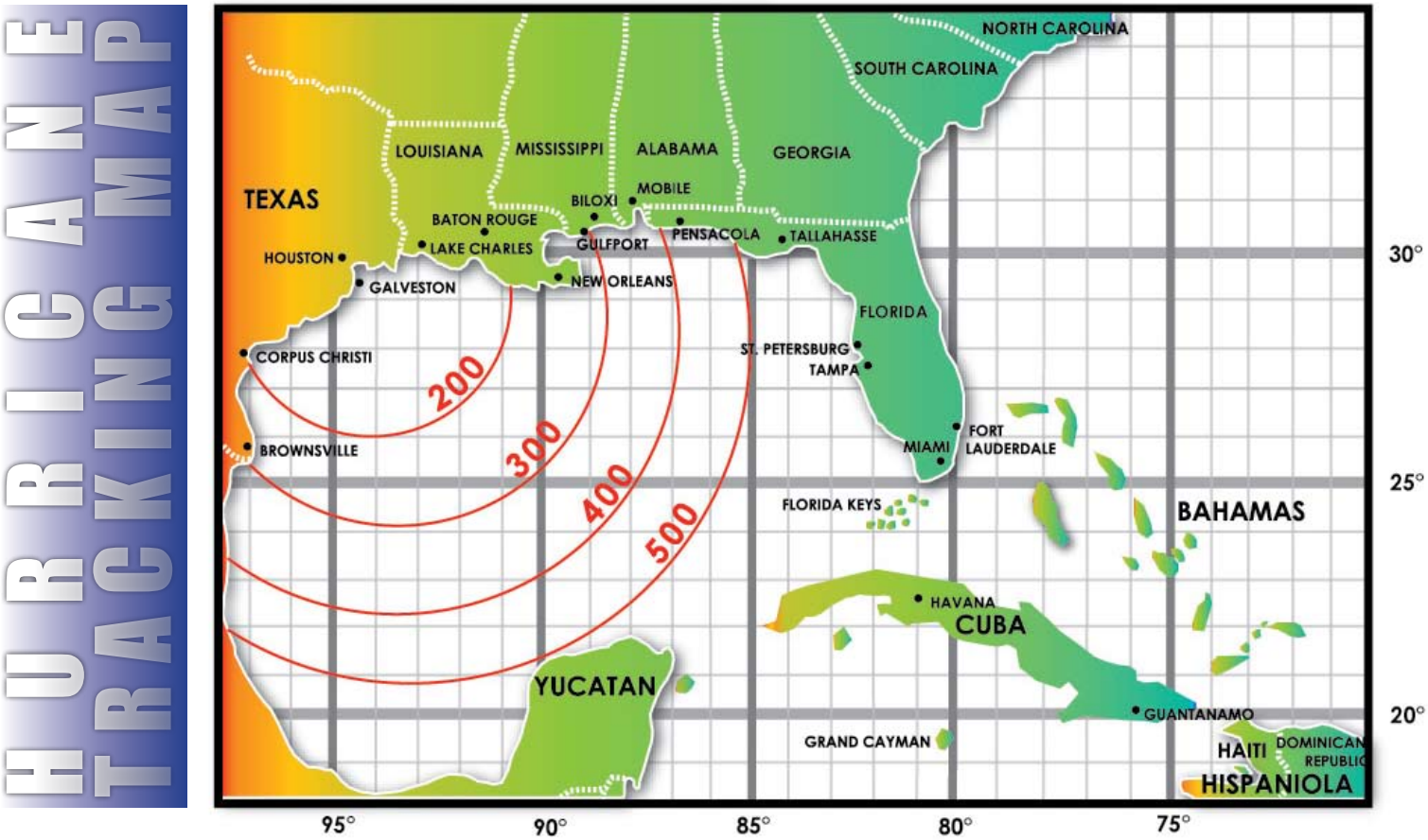
- Keep these records in a waterproof, portable container: Wills, insurance policies, contracts & deeds, stocks and bonds, passports, social security cards, immunization records, bank account numbers, credit card account numbers & companies, inventory of valuable household goods, important, telephone numbers, family records (birth, marriage, death certificates)

DURING THE STORM

- Listen to the radio or TV for information
- Turn off utilities if you are instructed to do so
- Set your refrigerator thermostat to the coldest setting and keep the doors closed as much as possible
- Ensure a supply of water for sanitary purposes such as cleaning & flushing toilets.
- Fill the bathtubs and other large containers with water.
- Stay indoors during the hurricane and away from windows & glass doors. Don't be fooled by a lull in the storm. It could pick up again.
- Close all interior doors, secure & brace external doors
- Keep curtains & blinds closed
- Take refuge in a small interior room, closet, or hallway on the lowest level

To download the Disaster Preparedness Guide created by the Office of Emergency Management please visit: http://www.houstonoem.net/posted/1855/english.239340.pdf.

Tips continue on page 4.



Water Safety Is Not Just For The Summer!

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.

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 an 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 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.
Take Care of Your Loved Ones.

Photo by: ChavezSquared

SEVERE WEATHER PREPAREDNESS

continued from page 3

EVACUATE IF:

- You are directed to by local authorities
- If you live in a mobile home
- If you live in a high-rise building.
- If you live on the coast, on a floodplain, near a river or an inland waterway
- If you feel you are in danger:

AFTER THE STORM:

- Before you enter your home, walk carefully outside and check for loose power lines, gas leaks, downed electrical wires and structural damage. If you have doubts about the safety of your home, have your home inspected by a qualified building inspector.

DO NOT ENTER YOUR HOME IF:

- You smell gas
- Floodwaters remain around the home
- Your home was damaged by fire and the authorities have not declared it safe
- Use caution when opening cabinets
- Throw out all food that you think may be contaminated
- Check with authorities before using any water
- Clean salvageable items and use disinfectant when cleaning these items

INSURANCE:

Keep good records

- Call your agent. Take pictures of damages.
- Separate damaged from undamaged property
- Maintain a room-by-room inventory of missing or damaged items
- Keep accurate records on discarded items

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