



NEWS RELEASE

Department of Public Safety

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Prevent heat related illness during flood response

PIERRE, S.D. – South Dakotans involved in flood response efforts need to protect themselves from heat-related illness, according to the Department of Health.

The body normally cools itself by sweating but when humidity is high, sweat can't evaporate as quickly and the body can't release heat as quickly. When that happens, the body temperature can rise rapidly and damage the brain and other vital organs.

The very young, the elderly and those ill with conditions such as heart disease are particularly at risk. However, even young and healthy individuals can suffer heat-related illness if they participate in strenuous physical activities during hot weather. Take the following steps to protect yourself:

- Drink two to four glasses (16 – 32 oz.) of cool fluids each hour. Don't wait until you're thirsty to drink. A sports beverage can replace the salt and minerals you lose in sweat.
- Avoid alcohol or drinks with a lot of sugar – they cause your body to lose more fluid. Also, avoid very cold drinks, because they can cause stomach cramps.
- Take regular rest breaks in a shady spot or air-conditioned place – even a few hours spent in air conditioning can help your body stay cooler.
- Protect yourself from the sun by wearing a wide-brimmed hat and sunglasses, and by putting on sunscreen of SPF 15 or higher.
- Monitor the condition of your co-workers and have someone do the same for you. Heat-induced illness can cause a person to become confused or lose consciousness

The attached table (<http://doh.sd.gov/News/heat-illness-chart.pdf>) provides more detail about heat stroke, heat exhaustion and heat cramps. More information is also available from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, emergency.cdc.gov/disasters/extremeheat/. More information on flood response efforts is available at <http://disasterrecovery.sd.gov>.