



STATE OF FLORIDA

DIVISION OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

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January 30-February 3, 2012

Florida's Severe Weather Awareness Week takes place from January 30 – February 3, 2012. Severe Weather Awareness Week is an opportunity for Floridians to learn about the various weather hazards that frequently impact the state and how families and businesses can prepare for these natural events.

Each day focuses on a specific weather event. **Friday's focus is on temperature extremes and wildfires.**

Each summer, numerous tourists come from all over the world to enjoy the warm weather and sunny beaches, but most are unaware of just how hot it can get in Florida.

Surrounded by the Atlantic Ocean and the Gulf of Mexico, the state is always influenced by tropical moisture, especially in the summer. When hot temperatures combine with high humidity, our bodies feel like it is hotter than it really is. This is called the Heat Index. When the heat index reaches higher than 105 degrees F, conditions can become dangerous for both people and animals. A person can experience heat cramps, heat exhaustion or heatstroke. Long periods of exposure to these conditions may even result in death. When the combination of heat and humidity causes the heat index to reach dangerous levels, the National Weather service will issue Heat Advisories and Warnings.

DID YOU KNOW? The hottest temperature ever recorded in Florida was 109 degrees Fahrenheit on June 29, 1931, in Monticello. Also, in 2010, a heat index of 124 degrees was observed at the Apalachicola Airport.

When temperatures heat up, help protect yourself by wearing lightweight and light-colored clothing. Try to avoid outdoor events during the hottest parts of the day. Drink plenty of water or other non-alcoholic beverages. Check on the elderly, young children and animals during periods of prolonged heat, and always apply sunscreen before exposure to the sun.

(MORE)

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Severe Weather Awareness Week – Temperature Extremes and Wildfires - - Page Two

Though many people head south to escape the cold temperatures in the winter, it isn't always warmer in Florida. Strong winds can also make the air "feel" colder than it really is by removing the heat from our skin that our bodies generate. This is called the Wind Chill. Like high heat, very cold temperatures can also endanger humans. The National Weather Service will issue Wind Chill Advisories, Freeze Watches/Warnings, hard freeze watches/warnings, and Frost Advisories if cold weather will threaten an area.

***DID YOU KNOW?** The coldest temperature recorded in Florida was minus 2 degrees Fahrenheit in Tallahassee on February 13, 1899.*

Floridians should remember the "**Five P's**" of cold weather safety. The "5 P's" are: **Protecting People, Protecting Plants, Protecting Pets, Protect Exposed Pipes, and Practice Fire Safety.**

When cold temperatures threaten, stay indoors and use a safe heating source. Make sure to use space heaters according to their instructions, and be attentive to open flames. Do not use charcoal or other fuel-burning devices, such as grills that produce carbon monoxide. When outdoors, stay dry and in wind protected areas and wear multiple layers of loose-fitting, warm clothing.

Be aware of sensitive plants and animals. Bring in potted plants and use a blanket, sheet or tarp to cover plants in the ground. Bring all domesticated pets indoors or provide shelter for animals with a closed door to keep out the wind. Make sure the shelter is clean, dry, and well insulated with straw, wood shavings or a blanket. Be sure to have extra food as outdoor animals require more calories in the winter to generate energy to ward off the cold. Horses and other livestock need a windbreak, cover, warm bedding, abundant high-quality feed, and fresh water.

Wildfires can occur at any time of the year. Although wildfire season is considered to be year-round, the state sees a peak of activity beginning in January, continuing until the onset of more frequent rain during the wet season, usually in early to mid-June. Fire Weather Watches and Red Flag Warnings are issued by the National Weather Service to alert people and land managers to potentially hazardous burning conditions that may add to wildfire danger and lead to the loss of control of a fire.

***DID YOU KNOW?** Most wildfires are started by humans – the most common causes of human-started fires are arson and escaped burns of debris.*

To help control the spread of wildfires, residents across Florida are urged to be "Firewise". The [Firewise Communities Program](#) educates homeowners and community professionals about creating defensible space around their homes, helping to protect them from the dangers of wildfire. Information and tips on this program can be found at www.firewise.org.

More information on temperature hazards and wildfires and what you can do to protect yourself and others can be found at <http://www.weather.gov/om/heat/index.shtml>, <http://www.floridaforestservice.com/wildfire/> and www.FloridaDisaster.org. Florida Wildfire Awareness Week is April 8-14, 2012.

For more information on the Florida Division of Emergency Management and to GET A PLAN!, please visit: www.FloridaDisaster.org. Follow us on Twitter at www.Twitter.com/FLSERT and on Facebook at <http://www.Facebook.com/FloridaSERT>.

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