FLORIDA RESIDENTS AND VISITORS ACROSS THE PANHANDLE ADVISED TO USE CAUTION TODAY AS DANGEROUS HEAT INDICES ARE EXPECTED

TALLAHASSEE - Florida Emergency Management officials are advising residents and visitors along the Panhandle to use caution today as afternoon temperatures are forecast to be above normal with heat indices as high as 105 to 110 degrees.

The National Weather Service has issued a Heat Advisory for Wakulla, Franklin, Gulf, Bay and Walton counties through the afternoon and early evening as high heat indices are expected to persist for several hours.

“The Panhandle is expected to experience dangerously high temperatures and heat index values throughout this afternoon,” said State Meteorologist Amy Godsey. “We want to remind our residents and visitors how important it is to take precautions by remaining hydrated and avoiding extended hours in the afternoon sun when possible.”

When the heat index reaches more than 105 degrees Fahrenheit, conditions become dangerous for the general population. The National Weather Service will issue heat advisories and warnings when the combination of heat and humidity causes the heat index to reach extreme levels.

What is the Heat Index?
Surrounded by the Atlantic Ocean and the Gulf of Mexico, Florida is often influenced by tropical moisture, especially during the summer months. When high humidity values combine with high temperatures, our bodies think it is hotter than it actually is. This is called the heat index. The heat index is an accurate measure of how hot it really feels when relative humidity is added to the actual air temperature.

A person can experience sunstroke, heat cramps, heat exhaustion and even heatstroke if exposed to these conditions for an extended period of time.

Heat Safety Tips
- Dress for the heat. Wear lightweight, light-colored clothing. Light colors will reflect away some of the sun’s energy. It is also a good idea to wear a hat or to use an umbrella.
- Drink water. Carry water or juice with you and drink continuously even if you do not feel thirsty. Avoid alcohol and caffeine, which dehydrate the body.
- Eat small meals and eat more often. Avoid high-protein foods, which increase metabolic heat.
- Slow down and avoid strenuous activity. If you must do strenuous activity, do it during the coolest part of the day – morning hours between 4 and 7 a.m.

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Stay indoors when possible. If air conditioning is not available, stay on the lowest floor out of the sunshine.  Remember that electric fans do not cool, they simply circulate the air.

Be a good neighbor. Check in on elderly residents in your neighborhood and those who do not have air conditioning.

Don’t forget your pets. Make sure they have access to water, ventilation and shade.

Floridians who want to learn more about heat safety can visit: http://www.weather.gov/om/heat/index.shtml. 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/FLsrt and on Facebook at www.Facebook.com/FloridaSERT.

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