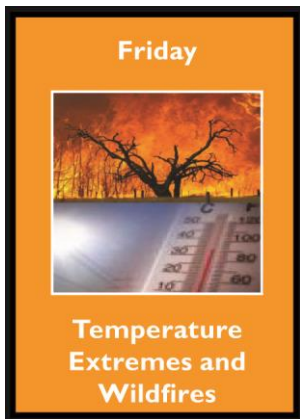




Florida's Severe Weather Awareness Week takes place from January 23-27, 2017. Severe Weather Awareness Week is an opportunity for Floridians to learn about the various weather hazards that frequently impact the state and how families and businesses can prepare for these natural events.



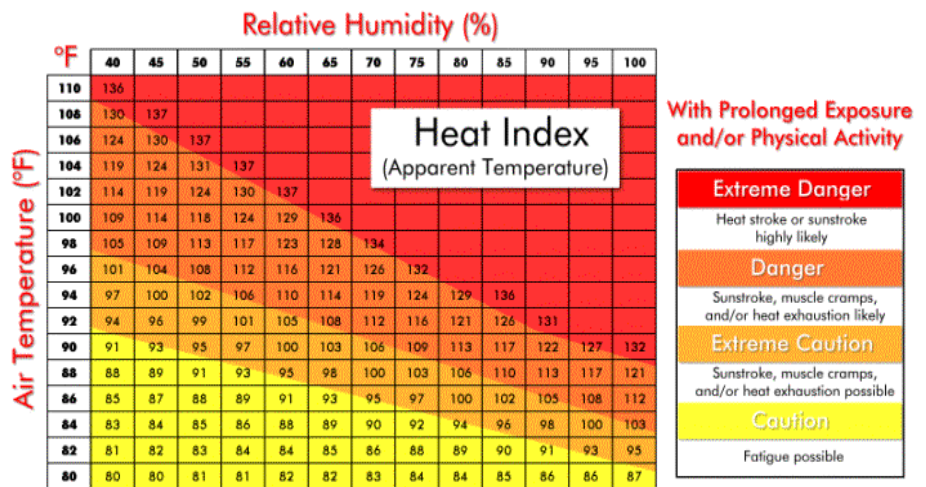
Each day focuses on a specific weather event. **Friday's topic is temperature extremes and wildfires.**

Though Florida is known as the Sunshine State, it could also qualify as the "Hot State." 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 since the increased moisture in the air limits our body's ability to cool off through sweating. This is called the Heat Index. When the heat index reaches higher than 105 degrees Fahrenheit, conditions can become dangerous for both people and animals. A person can experience heat cramps, heat exhaustion or heatstroke that may result in death if exposed to these conditions for a long period of time. 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. In 2010, a heat index of 124 degrees was observed at the Apalachicola Airport.

To help protect yourself against the hot summer heat, make sure to wear lightweight and light-colored clothing. Try to avoid doing or scheduling outdoor events during the hottest parts of the day (usually 10 a.m. until 4 p.m.). Drink plenty of water or other non-alcoholic beverages. Check on the elderly, young children and animals during periods of prolonged heat. Apply sunscreen before exposure to the sun.





Though many people head south to escape the cold temperatures in the winter, it isn't always warmer in Florida. There have been numerous severe cold outbreaks that have affected the state with below freezing temperatures and strong winds that produce bitterly cold wind chills. 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/Watches/Warnings, 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 -2 degrees (2 degrees below 0) Fahrenheit in Tallahassee on Feb.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.**

To prepare yourself from the bitter cold, 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.

Also, be aware of sensitive plants and animals. Bring in potted plants and drape a blanket, sheet or tarp over plants in the ground. Pets are just as susceptible to the cold as people are. Bring all domesticated pets indoors or at least 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. Pet stores sell heated bowls to resist water freezing. 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, too.



Not only should practicing fire safety be considered when trying to heat your home during the winter, but residents and visitors should practice fire safety outdoors since wildfire season in Florida is considered to be 12 months long. While wildfires can start at any time of the year, the state sees a peak of activity during the early part of the year – beginning in January and continuing until the onset of more frequent rain, usually in early to mid-June. Fire Weather Watches and Red Flag

Practice the 5 "Ps" of Cold Weather Safety

When cold weather is in the forecast, remember the "5 P's of Cold Weather Safety."

- 
01 Protect People
 Remember to dress in layers and wear a hat and gloves. It is important to try to stay out of the wind and to stay dry. Also, remember to check on young children and the elderly who are the most sensitive to cold weather.
- 
02 Protect Pets
 If cold weather is in the forecast, be sure to bring outdoor pets inside or give them a warm shelter to stay in.
- 
03 Protect Plants
 Cover cold sensitive plants to protect them from the dangerous temperatures.
- 
04 Protect Pipes
 Cover pipes and allow outdoor faucets to slowly drip to prevent from freezing and breaking.
- 
05 Practice Fire Safety
 Use safe heating sources indoors. Do not use fuel-burning devices such as grills; they release carbon monoxide, which is a deadly gas. Also, make sure to use space heaters according to their instructions and be attentive to open flames.

 For more information about how you can prepare for all types of weather, visit www.FloridaDisaster.org


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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??? A typical year in Florida (based on a 20-year average) will see over 3,500 fires burn nearly 164,000 acres of land. While lightning is responsible for many fires, most wildfires are caused by humans – the most common causes of human-started fires are arson and escaped burns of debris.

In 2016, Florida saw over 3,000 wildfires burn nearly 75,000 acres. 2012 through 2015 also recorded below normal wildfire seasons.

Some of the most devastating wildfire seasons occur during La Niña years. Winter La Niña events are frequently associated with warmer and drier conditions in Florida, which helps to increase wildfire activity. In contrast to La Niña, there are also events known as El Niño, which generally suppresses wildfire activity due to cooler and wetter winters in Florida. Since 2013, we were in a “neutral” or “El Niño” phase. Starting in July of 2016, a very slow transition to La Niña started and is continuing today. This transition is expected to continue into February. Forecasters are expecting us to remain in more of a

“neutral” phase through the first half of this year; however, effects similar to what we see during La Niña are expected, which means we may see an active fire season this year.

To help control the spread of wildfires, residents across Florida are urged to be “Firewise”. The Firewise program is designed to help homeowners reduce the threat of wildfire around their homes. Homeowners can make their yards fire resistant by planting specific types of vegetation and landscaping in a way that fire will not threaten their homes. Information and tips on this program can be found at www.firewise.org and floridaforestservice.com.

Florida Wildfire Awareness Week is April 10-16, 2017. 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.freshfromflorida.com/Divisions-Offices/Florida-Forest-Service/Wildland-Fire>, <http://floridawildfireprevention.com/faq.aspx> and www.FloridaDisaster.org.

Average proportion of wildfires by cause, 1981-2012

