

Article for 080515

Okay, so I can't stop thinking about the heat! I wanted the rain to subside. I wanted winter to stay away so I could feel the wonderful sunshine on my face! I know, I asked for it! I got it! Now it's hot! I sat in my office the other day, which is in the basement of the courthouse. Normally, one would think of a basement as dark, dreary, wet and cold. Well, this one is not! At least not in the summertime! My thermometer showed almost 79 degrees the other morning IN my office.

I'm very fortunate to have a job that is mostly indoors, though. Many of my family, friends, and neighbors must work outside in this heat. I saw an article in the Meteor just a couple of weeks ago about the dangers of heat stroke and how to protect yourself from overheating. The article was very informative, indeed!

I would like to focus even more on heat and the elderly. There are many interesting changes that happen as we age. If you noticed, I used the word "interesting" above, and for a number of reasons. Each morning I find it "interesting" that my hip hurts a little more and more each day. I force myself to find it "interesting" to try to discover a familiar person's name when it escapes my memory. I also find it "interesting" that situations don't usually upset me as much as they used to (unless we're talking road names here!). "Interesting" enough is a quote for the CDC that says that "People aged 65 years or older are less likely to sense and respond to changes in temperature." Hmm. I never really thought about that before, but I am thinking that we all need to pay closer attention to our elderly friends and family who might need little reminders about how heat can negatively affect them, and how we can help protect them.

It would be nice if everyone was able to stay indoors in the air conditioning all day, but we know that is not true. Did you also know that elderly people should not rely on a fan as their primary cooling device during an extreme heat event, such as the 100 + days we have forecasted currently? Have you thought about checking on a friend or neighbor during these hot days, and/or having someone check on you?

If someone you know – or even yourself – needs help dealing with the heat, I've got some reminders for you! Seek air conditioned environments, if possible. Drink more water than usual and don't wait to be thirsty to drink. You'll already be starting to dehydrate by that time. Don't use the stove or oven to cook – it will make you and your house hotter. Wear loose, lightweight, light-colored clothing. Take cool showers or baths to cool your body temperature. Use cooling rags on pulse points between showers or baths. Check the local news for health and safety updates, which may reference the current heat index. When there's a lot of moisture in the air, the body's ability to cool itself through sweating is impaired. Stay indoors during midday hours when the sun is hottest. Avoid exercise and strenuous activity, particularly outdoors, when it is very hot out. Seek medical attention if you or someone you know has symptoms of heat-related illness, like muscle cramps, headaches, nausea or vomiting.

I hope these reminders will help you and your loved ones continue to Be Safe Out There!