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## **NEW HEAT REPORT STRESSES SUMMER DANGERS**

Arizona heat kills dozens of people every summer. Young and old fall victim to heat exhaustion and heatstroke as the temperatures rise. A new ADHS report, *Deaths from Exposure to Excessive Natural Heat Occurring in Arizona 1992-2009*, examines the timing, age, nationality and location of those who died. A total of 1,485 people died from exposure to heat during those 18 years.

For the first time ADHS included deaths of those who are not Arizona residents, calling attention to the heat danger for residents, visitors and illegal immigrants. Arizona residents were more likely to be older and die in urban areas, like Phoenix or Tucson. Visitors to the state whose deaths were tied to heat were more likely to be young adults. Illegal immigrants tended to be young or middle-aged adults who died in border counties while crossing the desert. The number of immigrants that died greatly increased in 1998 following a federal crackdown on illegal immigration in California and Texas.

“The heat in our southern deserts isn’t just a nuisance, it’s lethal,” said Will Humble, ADHS Director. “But you don’t need to be afraid of the summer heat, just respect it. By taking simple precautions you can still get out, exercise, be physically active and enjoy the beautiful Arizona outdoors.”

Almost 1,400 Arizonans every year suffer from a heat related illnesses so serious they end up in the emergency department, which results in hundreds of Arizonans being admitted to the hospital. In 2008, the average per-person hospital treatment cost for heat related illnesses in Arizona was about \$7,500 per person, leading to a whopping \$11,000,000 dollars in treatment costs. Arizona hospitals estimate approximately \$11 million dollars was spent in 2008 for emergency department visits.

In the 18 years covered in the report, approximately 40 Arizonans died each year from heat related illnesses. The report also finds that men are more at risk for heat-related death – more than 70 percent of those who died were male. The highest number of heat-related deaths happened in 2005 with 225 individuals dying, 2006 was second with 137 deaths. In 2009, 110 people died from heat-related causes. There were no children under 10 who died in 2009.

More information about patterns and trends of health care for Arizonans can be found at [www.azdhs.gov/plan/](http://www.azdhs.gov/plan/). Keep up-to-date with all Arizona Department of Health Services news with the [Director’s Blog](#), [Twitter](#), [facebook/azdhs](#) and [azdhs.gov](http://azdhs.gov).

## KEY TERMS AND TIPS

**Heat-related illness** can begin as sunburn and fatigue and progress to heat cramps

**Heat Exhaustion** has symptoms of heavy sweating, paleness, muscle cramps, tiredness or weakness, dizziness or headache, nausea or vomiting, and faintness. Untreated heat exhaustion can progress to heatstroke, a medical emergency. Even when treated, the death rate for heatstroke may be as high as 33%. Permanent neurologic damage occurs in up to 17% of survivors, and its likelihood increases with longer duration of heatstroke.

**Heat Stroke** produces an oral temperature of  $> 39.4^{\circ}\text{C}$ ; rapid, strong pulse; red, hot, and dry or sweaty skin; throbbing headache or dizziness; nausea; confusion; and unconsciousness.

The Arizona Department of Health Services offers the following prevention tips to avoid heat-related illness:

- Never leave infants, children or pets inside a parked vehicle.
- Increase fluid intake, regardless of activity level. Don't wait until thirsty to drink fluids; drink more liquid than one's thirst indicates.
- Avoid "heat hangover." Continue to drink fluids even after strenuous activity. This will enable the body to maintain optimum hydration, and help prevent the after effects of heat exposure such as headaches and fatigue.
- Avoid beverages containing alcohol, caffeine or large amounts of sugar as they dehydrate the body.
- Avoid very cold beverages as they cause stomach cramps.
- Limit exercise or outdoor activity between the hours of 11 a.m. and 3 p.m. when the sun is at its peak intensity. If active during this time frame, drink a minimum of 16 to 32 ounces of water each hour.
- Some medications, both prescription and over-the-counter, may increase the risk of heat-related illness.

The report "*Deaths from Exposure to Excessive Natural Heat Occurring in Arizona 1992-2009*" was prepared as a supplement to injury mortality statistics for Arizona residents. The full report on Arizona heat related deaths is available on the Arizona Department of Health Services website at <http://www.azdhs.gov/plan/report/heat/index.htm>