



**Healthy Ageing & Access Division
Home and Community Care Program
Extreme Heat Arrangement Strategy**

Background

An exceptional heatwave affected south-eastern Australia during late January and early February 2009. Widespread very hot conditions began to develop in the southeast from 27 January and continued for approximately two weeks. In southern South Australia temperatures widely reached their highest levels since at least 1939.

In the 20th century, heatwaves have caused more deaths in Australia than any other natural hazard. During a heatwave, when temperatures remain abnormally high for an extended period, it can be a high health risk or fatal, particularly among vulnerable population groups such as the elderly, people with a pre-existing medical condition and people with a disability.

With global warming resulting in rising temperatures and common extreme weather circumstances, heatwaves are likely to become more common in Australia.

Key South Australian Government departments, led by the State Emergency Service (SASES), have prepared an Extreme Heat Arrangements Annex to the Extreme Weather Hazard Plan to ensure a coordinated approach to increasing community preparedness, awareness and response to extreme heat events. To complement these arrangements the Local Government Association of South Australia has developed an 'Extreme Heat Guide for Local Government in South Australia – October 2011' http://www.lga.sa.gov.au/webdata/resources/files/Extreme_Heat_Guide.pdf.

Purpose

The purpose of this strategy is to ensure:

- residents, consumers, staff, volunteers and contractors have information and guidance in the event of a heatwave; and
- the risk of heat stress to residents, consumers, staff, volunteers and contractors is minimized through the activation of emergency responses to a heatwave as outlined in this strategy.

This strategy is a 'living document' and will be refined and revised as necessary to capture lessons learnt from each extreme weather event. Revisions will also ensure alignment with the State Extreme Heat Arrangements Annex and the Extreme Heat Guide for Local Government in South Australia.

This strategy will be reviewed annually.

Extreme Heat Arrangements – Activation triggers

The SASES is responsible for issuing Extreme Heat Watch and Warning messages prior to a likely heat event.

The trigger for providing advice to the public about the risk of an extreme heat event commences with the Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) temperature predictions. The trigger points for various actions are based on a formula using the average daily temperature (ADT). The average daily temperature is calculated by dividing the total of the maximum day and minimum overnight temperature by two.

The messages are issued as follows:

1. **Extreme Heat Watch** issued at:

ADT \geq 29C (average of 36C and 22C) for three or more consecutive days

An '**Extreme Heat Watch**' is issued 48-72 hours in advance of an event to give advance notice of the possibility of excessively hot conditions.

2. **Extreme Heat Warning** issued at:

ADT \geq 32C (average of 40C and 24C) for three or more consecutive days

An '**Extreme Heat Warning**' is issued 0-48 hours in advance of an Extreme heat event that is expected to last 3 days or more.

Local Government Role in Extreme Heat Planning

The Extreme Heat Guide for Local Government states that the primary role of Local Government should be to promote community awareness and education about the dangers of heat stress and the measures that can be adopted to mitigate the effect. This includes reinforcement of the health messages promoted by appropriate Government agencies such as SASES and Department of Health. http://www.ses.sa.gov.au/site/community_safety/heatwave_information.jsp and <http://www.health.sa.gov.au/Default.aspx?tabid=679>

And the councils should complement and support existing HACC programs and the Red Cross Telecross REDi program but not be a provider of a duplicate service. Telecross REDi is endorsed by the State Government and assists vulnerable and isolated people to prepare for and cope with extreme weather events and supports and enhances the HACC program.

Information about Telecross REDi program is available at:

http://www.sa.gov.au/upload/franchise/Emergency,%20safety%20and%20infrastructure/Telecross_REDi.pdf

Strategy

The elements of this Extreme Heat Arrangement Strategy can be divided into stages with each stage characterised by a set of key actions:

- Stage 1 – Seasonal Preparation
- Stage 2 – Alert and Readiness
- Stage 3 – Response/action.

Stage 1 - Seasonal Preparation

This refers to those activities undertaken prior to the season, and as part of ongoing support planning and delivery, to contribute to being prepared for an extreme heat event.

The best defence to heat related illness is prevention. Being well prepared to provide support services in extreme heat is about preventing, reducing or mitigating the harmful effects these weather conditions may have on people, particularly those who are most vulnerable to the health effects of extreme heat.

These activities include:

- Staff education – this Extreme Heat Arrangement Strategy and training about Heatwave awareness and the associated health risks
- Ensure all staff and volunteers are aware of the City of Salisbury Inclement Weather Policy and Procedure and the Sunlight and UV Protection Procedure
- Educate all stakeholders about roles, responsibilities and procedures to be followed in the event of a heat alert.
- Create awareness on the dangers of heatwaves especially in the months leading up to summer and throughout the hotter months
- Distribute heatwave information to consumers, such as SASES Heatwave Information guide and Telecross REDi'
- Display information in centres, including the availability of brochures
- Discuss heat arrangements at social groups
- As part of care planning, service delivery and reviews, endeavour to identify consumers who may be at high risk during periods of extreme heat.
- Identify, explore and encourage and involvement of existing networks with family, friends and neighbours.
- Encourage clients, friends, family and neighbours to ring each other regularly, especially during extreme heat events and other times of concern to 'see if they are ok'.
- Assist with Telecross REDi registration (if required)
- Facilities – ensure all equipment necessary to cope with summer months are maintained and in good working order (eg. Air conditioners, fans, fridges and freezers, water supply, adequate cool/cold water available)

Some in-home and centre based services may be suspended temporarily without adversely affecting the health and/or safety of the client. The scheduling and planning of others may need to be modified in consultation with consumers and their carers. Services may continue if the local circumstances are suitable (that is, air-conditioned premises, air-conditioned transport).

The following is a brief guide of the practices developed in preparing for summer months:

- 1) In-Home Support:
 - a) Re-schedule support in negotiation with consumer, ensuring that health and /or safety of all people involved are a priority.
- 2) Transport:
 - a) Ensure all vehicle maintained and air conditioners in good working order;
 - b) Plan to modify scheduling of vehicles and regular shopping as required; and
 - c) Cancel one off shop/outings when weather forecast 33C.
- 3) Social Groups:
 - a) Jack Young Centre – distribute and display information and modify programs as required
 - b) Para Hills Club – distribute and display information and modify programs as required
 - c) CaLD Social Groups – distribute and display information and modify programs as required
 - d) Gone to Seed – distribute and display information and modify programs as required
- 4) Social Outings:
 - a) Para Hills Club Outings - cancel when weather forecast is 33C
 - b) CaLD Social Outings – cancel when weather forecast is 35C
 - c) Gone to Seed - cancel when weather forecast is 33C (includes Workshops etc.)
- 5) Meals:
 - a) Plan to adapt menus (preferably with high water content, such as fruit and salads) when extreme heat watch issued.
 - b) Arrange for meal deliveries to occur in the cooler part of the day.

Note: If weather forecast applies it is as indicated on TV Channels at 6pm the day before the scheduled event.

Stage 2 – Alert and Readiness

This stage will be activated on advice from the Manager, Healthy Ageing and Access, following the notification of an **Extreme Heat Watch** issued by the SASES. This triggers the requirement for all staff to commence preparing for an expected Heatwave.

- 1) The Manager will send an email to all Salisbury Healthy Ageing and Access staff to notify that an Extreme Heat Watch has been issued to alert of a pending heatwave.
- 2) Staff will commence to prepare for a heatwave:
 - a) Announce, display and distribute the heatwave message to ensure that consumers, residents, staff, volunteers and contractors are aware.
 - b) Remind people that cordless telephone will not work during a power failure, therefore plan have an alternative means of communication.









- c) Review, modify or reschedule support services, in consultation with the consumer, in preparation for the pending heatwave.
 - d) Endeavour to identify any consumers who may be considered a high risk and encourage them to register with Telecross REDi.
 - e) Check that there are adequate arrangements for food shopping to reduce having to go out in hot weather.
- 3) Arrange for contracted personnel to provide essential services if volunteers are unavailable due to weather conditions.
 - 4) Ensure that staff and volunteers are aware of risk and protective factors

Stage 3 – Response / Action

This stage will be activated on advice from the Manager, Healthy Ageing and Access, following the notification of an **Extreme Heat Warning** issued by the SASES. This triggers the requirement for all staff to respond with actions developed in stage 1 and 2 of this strategy.

- 1) The Manager will send an email to all Salisbury Healthy Ageing and Access staff to notify that an Extreme Heat Warning has been issued to inform that a heatwave expected to last for 3 days or more is predicted within 0-48 hours.
- 2) Staff will respond with the actions developed and identified, which may include:
 - Coordinators will review and check on consumers, as much as possible.
 - Monitor any consumers identified as at risk, as a result reports from volunteers, contactors, family, friends or neighbours
 - Cancel and/or re-schedule in-home support services, meal deliveries and shopping services as required (eg moving support services to cooler part of day or another day, shop from a list, deliver meals in a cooler part of the day, use contract staff to cover if volunteers are unavailable, re-schedule outdoor tasks to a cooler period etc.)
 - Jack Young Centre and Para Hill Club will remain open during normal business hours
 - Work with other providers, carers/family members to assist with extended services for clients at risk e.g. food spoilage, essential food supplies etc.
 - Remind everyone to keep up fluid intake – regular drinks of water, ice blocks etc.
 - Remind people to check that pets are coping with the heat also, ensure water and shade available, wet them down to keep cool.
 - staff will offer information on strategies to manage heat (eg. stay indoors and close curtains during the day, open up windows at night if cool winds occur, use air conditioners and fans wherever possible, use wet towel and ice packs to cool down, keep in touch regularly with family, friends and neighbours, limit outdoor activities to mornings and evenings)
 - HACC consumers who live alone should be recommended and encouraged to register with Telecross REDi and if necessary assisted to register
- 3) Ensure staff and volunteers are aware of and follow this Extreme Heat Arrangement Strategy and the City of Salisbury Inclement Weather Policy and Procedure and the Sunlight and UV Protection Procedure
- 4) Ensure adequate cooled water is available

HEATWAVE INFORMATION

Heatwave information (Source SASES Website)	
	<p>Stay hydrated You should drink two to three litres of water a day even if you don't feel thirsty. Avoid 'fizzy', alcoholic and caffeinated drinks and do not take salt tablets (unless instructed to by a GP).</p>
	<p>Dress for summer Lightweight, light coloured clothing reflects heat and sunlight and helps your body maintain a normal temperature.</p>
	<p>Check on those at risk Visit at risk individuals such as the sick and elderly at least twice a day and keep an eye on children. Watch for signs of heat-related illness.</p>
	<p>Minimise sun exposure Keep out of the sun as much as possible. If you must be in the sun, wear a shirt, hat and sunglasses. Also make sure you wear sunscreen to prevent sunburn, which limits the body's ability to cope with heat.</p>
	<p>Prepare your home Prepare your home early. Service or replace your air conditioner BEFORE you need it. Curtains, awnings and blinds can also help to keep the home cool.</p>
	<p>Make use of air conditioning If you don't have air conditioning, make use of public facilities such as shopping centres, art galleries, cinemas or other air conditioned buildings. Portable fans are also useful in drawing in cool air, or exhausting warm air from a room.</p>
	<p>Remember your pets Pets can be particularly vulnerable to the heat. Make sure they have shade and plenty of cool water to last the day.</p>
	<p>Seek medical advice if necessary For medical advice contact your local GP or telephone Healthdirect Australia on 1800 022 222. For immediate medical assistance telephone 000</p>

Symptoms of heat stress include headaches, lethargy, nausea and vomiting. More severe symptoms can include weakness, confusion, and in extreme cases, collapse, loss of urine output and stopping of sweating.

If you are feeling unwell, contact your local GP or phone **Healthdirect Australia** on **1800 022 222**.

For **immediate medical attention phone 000** and request an ambulance.