

IAFC Offers Tips on How to Deal With Extreme Temperatures

Fairfax, VA, July 26, 2005... Much of the United States and Canada has experienced record high temperatures over the past several days and weeks. The IAFC urges fire departments to take extra precautions to ensure the safety of all firefighters and personnel during periods of exceptionally hot temperatures.

In response to requests from IAFC members, the IAFC spoke with several fire departments that regularly experience temperatures over 100 degrees to compile the following suggested actions:

1. Keep hydrated. Drink lots of water, on duty and off duty. Have drinking water available on all apparatus, in all chiefs' cars and all other fire department vehicles. Urge firefighters to drink plenty of water before coming on duty.
2. Avoid soft drinks, sugary drinks or caffeinated drinks.
3. Urge personnel to get plenty of rest while off duty.
4. Urge personnel to report any and all symptoms of dehydration, heat cramps, heat stroke or heat exhaustion. See the resources below to find out the signs and symptoms of these conditions.
5. Limit outdoor exercise.
6. Establish a rehabilitation center at major incidents. If possible, set up the rehab center under a tent or in a shaded area.
7. Set up an extra hose to provide a place for firefighters to cool off.
8. Pull extra alarms or bring in extra companies at major incidents to relieve the first-arriving crews.

In addition, a number of resources are available to help departments deal with extremely high temperatures:

- Phoenix Regional Standard Operating Procedure: Heat Stress Management—
www.iafc.org/downloads/PhnxSOP_heat.pdf
- Phoenix Fire Department Heat Stress Tips—
www.iafc.org/downloads/heat_stress.doc
- Extreme Heat: A Prevention Guide to Promote Your Personal Health and Safety (CDC)—
http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/extremeheat/heat_guide.asp
- Tips for Preventing Heat-Related Illness (CDC)—
<http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/extremeheat/heattips.asp>
- Heat Cramps (Mayo Clinic)—
<http://www.mayoclinic.com/invoke.cfm?id=FA00021>
- Heat Exhaustion (Mayo Clinic)—
<http://www.mayoclinic.com/invoke.cfm?id=FA00020>
- Heat Stroke (Mayo Clinic) —
<http://www.mayoclinic.com/invoke.cfm?id=FA00019>
- Dehydration (Mayo Clinic) —
<http://www.mayoclinic.com/invoke.cfm?id=DS00561>