

Fact Sheet

Extreme heat guidance for Aged Care Services

Guidance for aged care services to ensure a planned, managed, and effective response to an extreme heat or heatwave event.

- > Understand the mechanisms of heat illnesses, clinical manifestations, diagnosis, and treatment.
- > Recognise the early signs of heat-related illness, including heatstroke which is a medical emergency.
- > Be aware of the risk factors in heat-related illness.
- > Consider holding a team/staff meeting prior to summer to increase staff awareness and to conduct any training related to heat and the health of both staff and residents/clients.
- > Consider sharing information about heat health with your residents/clients through written information, videos, social media and information sessions, this includes:
 - sharing A Health extreme heat factsheets, translated resources and the Healthy in the Heat booklet available at www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/healthyintheheat
 - ordering printed copies of the Healthy in the Heat booklet can be ordered by emailing: Health.DisasterManagementBranch@sa.gov.au
 - monitoring heatwave warnings and advice as well as the [Easy English Heatwaves](http://www.ses.sa.gov.au) available at www.ses.sa.gov.au
 - registering for the free Telecross REDi service to ensure vulnerable people are checked on during a declared heatwave by calling 1800 188 071.
- > Recognise the symptoms of and provide appropriate treatment for mild heat-related conditions, such as dehydration and heat cramps.
- > In cases of suspected heat exhaustion or heat stroke, immediately refer for medical assessment at the nearest emergency department or by calling 000.
- > Educate those at risk and their carers about how to look after themselves during hot weather.
- > Reinforce to carers the importance of also caring for themselves, especially during the heat.
- > Have phone numbers of key resources within easy access – emergency departments, SA Ambulance, SA Virtual Care Service or Royal District Nursing Service (RDNS).
- > Consider developing a list of at-risk residents/clients and how you will ensure that this list is accessible to relevant staff.
- > Consider rescheduling activities to earlier times of the day when it is cooler, postponing appointments to another day, or cancelling activities completely (e.g. exercise classes) to prevent clients and staff from travelling in the heat. You can also consider switching face-to-face appointments to a phone call where appropriate to limit travel for both staff and clients.
- > Ensure the care home is heat-friendly for residents/clients and staff, with cool areas, drinking water, blinds closed to block the sun, and regular staff breaks for hydration.
- > Consider putting up posters and having printed information in your care home/service that are available from the SA Health website (note that these are available in a range of community languages).
- > Develop and implement a communication policy to keep staff updated if extreme heat or a heatwave is forecast.
- > Have a prepared and practiced heat plan and response to a heat or heatwave warning.

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Self-assessment checklist for Aged Care Services

Considerations for your extreme heat and heatwave plan	Y/N
Does your service/care home have a documented heat and heatwave plan, that includes responsibilities and risks?	
Are relevant staff aware of your plan, how to access it and what it contains?	
Do you have processes in place for communicating the plan to all staff, residents/clients, carers, and families?	
Has your plan been reviewed since the last summer season? Date of last review:	
Is it integrated with your service/facility emergency and disaster response plan?	
Is it integrated with necessary technical and support services resources/plans to manage extreme heat?	
Is it integrated with any contingency plans for potential power outages during periods of extreme heat?	
Is there a clear escalation protocol to notify executive team members of extreme heat, heatwaves, and/or disruptions to service delivery?	
Does your plan specify how you will monitor the forecast for extreme heat or heatwave conditions? (i.e. SA SES heat and heatwave warnings, or Bureau of Meteorology heatwave warnings)	
Does your plan specify actions for a forecast single day of extreme heat?	
Does your plan specify actions for a forecast multi-day heatwave?	
Considerations for client/resident care in your extreme heat plan	Y/N
Does your plan address processes for proactively assessing resident's/client's health care needs in preparation for and during extreme heat?	
Does your plan incorporate measures to ensure increased availability and supply of cool drinks for residents/clients, staff, and visitors during periods of extreme heat?	
Does it consider risk assessment, monitoring and additional care or support for at-risk residents/clients, and escalation plans should they become unwell?	
Does it incorporate arrangements to appropriately identify and manage residents/clients experiencing heat-related illness (e.g. fluids, cooling, observation, specific treatments as indicated).	
Considerations for staff in your extreme heat plan	Y/N
Does your plan ensure staff are trained, skilled and available to manage extreme heat events if they occur, including knowledge of plans and pre-summer exercising of plans?	
Does it include advice for all staff to keep themselves safe (e.g. hydration, regular breaks, safety when travelling to and from work?)	
Are staff trained to recognise at-risk residents/clients/staff and the management of heat-related illness?	
Does your plan have arrangements to consider increasing staffing during forecast extreme heat or heatwaves, and on the days that follow?	

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Considerations for power outages in your extreme heat plan	Y/N
Do you have a plan for an alternate power supply in the event of a power outage?	
Do you have a plan for failure of air-conditioning?	
Do you have a plan for appropriate and safe storage of medications, food, and drinks during heatwaves, or in event of power outages during periods of extreme heat?	
Additional considerations	Y/N
Have you assessed the overall physical environment of your care home/service to determine how prepared it is for prolonged heat? And what could be done to make your care home cooler (e.g. servicing air conditioners, insulation, awnings, shade cloth, more trees and green walls)?	
Have you considered access to hydration and cooling (e.g. a water station, fans, air-conditioning) for residents/clients and visitors, including in the waiting room and transport/access areas?	
Have you got sufficient quantities and storage for equipment, supplies, medication during periods of extreme heat?	

For more information

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