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After 4 heat-related deaths in Riverside County, Health officials warn residents to take precautions with predicted hike in temperatures

Forecasters are predicting a sharp rise in temperatures starting Monday, and health officials are urging residents to take steps to protect themselves and those who are most susceptible to the heat.

The prolonged heat played a factor in the deaths of four people – three in Hemet and one in Bermuda Dunes – who died since July 7. Dr. Cameron Kaiser, Riverside County public health officer, said it appears three were elderly and had underlying health issues that made them more susceptible to the heat, but that the high temperatures played a role in all four deaths.

“The elderly and the very young are particularly vulnerable to heat, and those with medical issues even more so,” said Kaiser. “If they’re in your family or they’re your neighbors, check in on them and make sure they’re doing okay. Even short periods of time in high temperatures can kill.”

The deaths included an 86-year-old woman and 87-year-old man found together July 8 in a Hemet residence; a 91-year-old man from Bermuda Dunes who was found in a residence July 16; and a 37-year-old man found July 7 in a parking lot in Hemet.

The National Weather Service is predicting triple-digit temperatures for much of Southern California, particularly in the desert areas of Riverside County starting Monday (July 23) and continuing for most of the week.

Residents and workers in the Coachella Valley and desert areas are encouraged to limit their time outdoors and avoid strenuous activities, even for those who believe they are acclimated to the heat.

Officials are urging residents to visit one of more than 50 cool centers located throughout the county. The centers will provide snacks and water, in addition to activities.

Kaiser reminded those who will be driving long distances to check their vehicles to make sure they are running properly and to carry extra water in the car. Drivers are also urged to never leave children, the elderly or pets in a parked vehicle, even for a short period of time.

Symptoms of heatstroke can include:

- * Headache
- * Dizziness
- * Weakness or muscle pains
- * Nausea and vomiting

People with these symptoms should immediately get to a cool place out of the sun, stay hydrated, and seek prompt medical attention if the symptoms are severe or don't improve.

The cool centers are coordinated by Community Action Partnership of Riverside County, which is part of Riverside University Health System-Public Health. For information about how to stay cool, or cool centers locations, go to www.capriverside.org