

Media Release

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Kent Resilience Forum Responds to Level 4 Heat Health Warning

The heat health alert has been ramped up to level 4 for the first time on record, with temperatures on Monday and Tuesday next week (18-19 July), potentially reaching as high as 40°C.

The government's Level 4 alert indicates that a severe heatwave could have impacts beyond health and social care with potential effects on transport systems, food, water, energy supplies and businesses.

Kent Resilience Forum (KRF) (a partnership of organisations and agencies who work together to ensure a coordinated response to emergencies and other issues affecting Kent), is advising Kent's residents to be prepared and will be supporting check-ins on vulnerable people.

The very young, elderly and those suffering from health conditions such as heart and lung disease can be at extra risk, but it is wise for all residents to take precautions when heat levels rise this high.

The hottest temperatures are expected on Monday and Tuesday, with highs of 40°C possible.

Health experts are appealing to people to check on friends, relatives and neighbours who may be less able to look after themselves. Key 'Beat the Heat' advice includes keeping cool, staying hydrated and being prepared – for example, staying out of the sun during the hottest part of the day, drinking cold drinks regularly, such as water and avoiding tea, coffee and alcohol.

People are also urged to make plans for important supplies, such as medicines, to minimise the need to travel during the heat of the day.

KCC Director of Public Health, Dr. Anjan Ghosh is leading the KRF response. He said: "We are expecting record temperatures and although we have not seen a level 4 alert before, the important thing is that we all prepare appropriately to deal with the extreme heat - it is vital that people think carefully about what they need to do to protect themselves, their family and particularly vulnerable people who might need extra assistance.

“Elderly people, those with underlying health conditions and those with young children can all be at particular risk. Remember though, these levels of heat can present risks for all of us so be prepared. Avoid travelling if you can, especially in the heat of the day. If you do need to travel, plan ahead and check for traffic issues. Take plenty of water with you, plan extra time for stops and think about medications you might need if your journey takes longer than expected.”

Top tips for staying safe in hot weather include:

- look out for those who may struggle to keep themselves cool and hydrated – older people, those with underlying conditions and those who live alone are particularly at risk
- stay cool indoors by closing curtains on rooms that face the sun – and remember that it may be cooler outdoors than indoors
- drink plenty of fluids and avoid excess alcohol
- never leave anyone in a closed, parked vehicle, especially infants, young children or animals
- check that fridges, freezers and fans are working properly
- try to keep out of the sun between 11am to 3pm, when the UV rays are strongest
- walk in the shade, apply sunscreen and wear a wide-brimmed hat, if you have to go out in the heat
- avoid physical exertion in the hottest parts of the day
- make sure you take water with you if you are travelling
- take care and make sure to [follow local safety advice](#) if you are going into the water to cool down
- check medicines can be stored according to the instructions on the packaging

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) will continue to monitor any heat-related illness and work closely with the Met Office, the NHS and other government departments to assess the impacts of this hot weather.

People are urged not to go to A&E or call 999 unless it's an emergency. If you are in any doubt, NHS111 can help you get the right treatment.

Dame Eileen Sills, Chief Nurse at NHS Kent and Medway said: “However much we might like the sun, we know that it can have detrimental effects on your health, especially for the young, our elderly residents and those who are most vulnerable. By taking simple precautions, such as staying hydrated and finding shade during the hottest parts of the day, you can significantly reduce the risk of becoming ill and

needing the services of the NHS. Could I also ask you where appropriate to check in on your vulnerable neighbours, families and friends.

Should you become unwell, unless it's an emergency, please remember to use 111 as your first point of contact for medical support. By phoning 111 or visiting 111.nhs.uk, you will be directed to the right service for you.

You can also visit our dedicated website – www.stopthinkchoose.co.uk – which lists local services, such as pharmacies and urgent treatment centres.”

More information about what KCC is doing to protect the people of Kent is available through www.kent.gov.uk/heatwave

Dr Agostinho Sousa, Head of Extreme Events and Health Protection at UKHSA said: Temperatures in England next week are likely to reach record levels, and it's important we all know how to stay well in hot weather. Check up on vulnerable friends, family and neighbours to make sure they stay hydrated, keep cool and know how to keep their homes cool.

Professor Penny Endersby, Chief Executive at the Met Office, said:

This is the first time we have issued a Red National Severe Weather Warning for extreme heat and the first time 40°C has been forecast in the UK. In this country we're used to treating a hot spell as a chance to go and play in in the sun. This is not that sort of weather.

We have seen when climate change has driven such unprecedented severe weather events around the world that it can be difficult for to make the best decisions because nothing in our life experiences has led us to know what to expect.

More information on the [common signs and symptoms](#) of heat exhaustion and heatstroke are available on NHS.UK.

UKHSA's '[beat the heat](#)' checklist identifies suitable actions people can take to protect themselves during periods of hot weather.

For further information contact Hayley Buery at Kent County Council Media Centre on 03000 414381 or email hayley.buery@kent.gov.uk

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