

August Fully Involved

## Are You Hot Enough Yet?

Without hesitation I can safely say that Summer is here. In the past couple of weeks we have definitely had some hot weather. Unlike other areas in the United States we are more susceptible to heat related injuries. This is due in large part to our normal low temperature weather. In Western Washington when we do get temperatures in the upper 80's to 90's our bodies are unable to cope with the excess stress. Heat related emergencies are split into three categories. Heat cramps, which is very common, heat exhaustion, somewhat common, and heat stroke, a life threatening emergency not commonly found in Western Washington.

Heat cramps are quite common in Western Washington, especially in the first hot days of summer. Symptoms include muscle pains and spasms usually in the arms, legs, or abdomen. These usually occur with strenuous activity. Most time stopping all activity and resting in a cool place will eliminate this emergency. Make sure that you drink a 50/50 mixture of a sports beverage and water. Be sure that cramps have subsided for a few hours prior to returning to work. Further exacerbation can lead to heat exhaustion or even heat stroke. If the cramps do not subside within a couple of hours contact medical aid.

Heat exhaustion is considered more serious than heat cramps. Heat exhaustion can develop after several hours or days of exposure to high temperatures and inadequate replenishment of fluids. The elderly and those experiencing medical complications are most prone. Symptoms include heavy sweating, paleness, muscle cramps, tiredness, weakness, dizziness, headache nausea and vomiting. Identifying these symptoms early is key. Drinking cool clear fluid and resting in a cool place are essential. Cool bathing along with rest are recommended if the person is able to walk under their own control. There is a bona fide medical emergency. If symptoms fail to decrease contact medical aid immediately.

Heat stroke is not commonly seen in our area but it is still a reality. It is the most serious of all heat emergencies. Your body is constantly producing heat as a result of your normal metabolism. Your brain is the regulator of this heat production. As your body temperature significantly increases, your brain loses the ability to regulate your body's temperature. As a result your body systems shut down due to the excessive heat. Heat stroke symptoms include high body temperature, rapid pulse, difficulty breathing, strange behavior, hallucinations, confusion, agitation, and disorientation. Left untreated heat stroke can lead to seizures, coma, and death. With heat stroke emergencies calling 911 is a must. Contact 911 immediately and provide active cooling to the patient. This can include ice packs to the armpits and groin.

Prevention to all heat emergencies includes staying hydrated, and limiting your exertion. A very happy and safe summer goes out to you and your family from us here at Mason

County Fire District 2. More information on heat related emergencies can be located on our web site at [WWW.MCFD2.COM](http://WWW.MCFD2.COM) or by calling 360-275-6711. With summer now here, plan ahead now for wild land fire prevention before it is too late.

Question of the month: At what body core temperature is an individual considered to be experiencing heat stroke? The first email or phone call that I receive with the correct answer will receive a gift from Starbucks Coffee.

Jeromy Hicks is currently Mason County Fire District 2's community outreach coordinator. With ten plus years of firefighting service including being a paramedic, fire prevention is his passion. Jeromy currently provides assistance with inspections, investigations, and education though out Mason County. He can be reached at 360-275-6711 ext. 2.