STATE OF WASHINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL AND HEALTH SERVICES
Home and Community Living Administration
Residential Care Services • P.O. Box 45600 • Olympia, Washington 98504

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Emergency Preparedness Considerations for Summer Hazards

Dear Provider/Administrator:

Summertime in Washington poses a variety of hazards that can be especially impactful to long-term care settings, including extreme heat, wildfires, wildfire smoke, and power disruptions. As we enter the summer season, it is imperative to be prepared for these situations. This can include reviewing and updating emergency plans, conducting emergency exercises, procuring equipment and supplies, and preparing your facilities. Now is the time to begin preparing for summer hazards.

Wildfires
Prepare your facility for wildfire defense. This can include clearing vegetation away from your building, cleaning debris from roofs and gutters, and upgrading components of your facility.

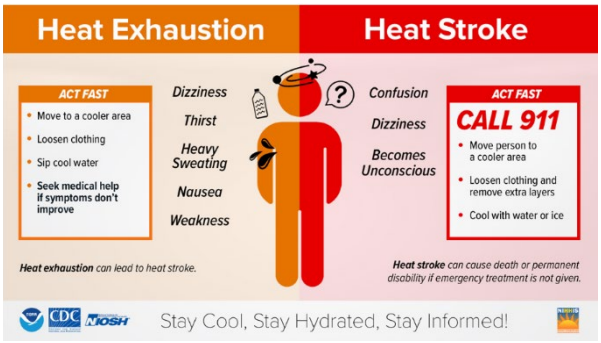
Staying alert on wildfires is a low cost and critical step for keeping your facility safe. Make sure you have signed up for alerts through your local county emergency management agency. Additionally, be familiar with wildfire watch applications. WatchDuty is a free application that allows you to monitor wildfires in real-time.

Review evacuation plans and resources. Review with staff triggers for evacuation. Maintain go-bags for both residents and staff/administrators. Ensure all vehicles are adequately fueled. Consider all needs of residents (including accessibility equipment, oxygen, etc.). Review agreements with transportation and Emergency Management Service (EMS) companies for evacuation assistance. Have multiple evacuation locations identified, this can include facilities, hotels, hospitals, and temporary shelter sites.

Extreme Heat
High temperatures can impact our state throughout the summer. Exposure to extreme heat can cause heat-related illnesses. Extreme heat has the highest fatality rate among all weather hazards and has a high correlation of death in long-term care settings. Extreme heat should be treated as any other major weather emergency.

Residents with a history of dehydration, cardiovascular disease, or pulmonary disease are particularly susceptible to heat-related illnesses. Know the signs and what to do for heat exhaustion and heat stroke.

Be prepared for heat: drink more water than usual, limit beverages high in sugar and sodium, caffeine, and alcohol, take cool showers/baths, cover windows and weather-strip doors and windows, avoid strenuous activities, and check on family, friends, teammates, neighbors, and residents. *Do NOT use fans if indoor temperatures are above 90°F because it will increase body temperature.



Power Safety Power Shutoffs
In 2024, several utility companies across Washington State implemented Public Safety Power Shutoff (PSPS) programs, a last-resort safety measure used to cut power in high-risk areas during critical fire weather conditions to reduce the risk of electrical system ignition of wildfires. Currently, PSPS may occur in the following service territories:

- Avista
- Benton Rural Electric Association
- Chelan Public Utility District 1
- Clallam County Public Utility District 1
- Columbia Rural Electric Association
- Cowlitz County Public Utility District 1
- Ferry County Public Utility District 1
- Klickitat County Public Utility District 1
- Kittitas County Public Utility District 1
- Lakeview Light & Power
- Hoops Mutual Power Company
- Okanogan County Electric Cooperative
- Okanogan County Public Utility District 1
- Pacific Power
- Peninsula Light & Power Company
- Puget Sound Energy
- Skamania County Public Utility District 1
- Snohomish County Public Utility District 1
- Tanner Electric Cooperative

Additional utility districts and companies may become involved. To stay informed, check with the local power supplier to see if they plan to implement PSPS measures and resources provided. Notify the local power supplier if there are residents that require life sustaining equipment that requires power.

Wildfire Smoke
Wildfire smoke exposure is associated with increased rates of emergency department visits. Older adults are more sensitive to the adverse effects of wildfire smoke. As the wildfire season approaches, it is recommended you familiarize yourself with tools to monitor outdoor air quality and begin preparations for your facilities.

Monitor outdoor air quality through tools such as the Washington Smoke Blog. When air quality drops to “moderate” or lower quality index levels, it is important to limit residents time outdoors to only necessary activities.

Maintain indoor air quality by limiting indoor pollutants. Keep windows and doors closed when air quality drops. Prepare your facility by checking seals around doors, upgrading air filters, and purchasing air quality monitors. Make purchases now, before items are out of stock.

Thank you for your continued commitment to residents’ health and safety. If you have any questions, please contact Serena Segura, Emergency Preparedness Coordinator, at serena.segura1@dshs.wa.gov.

Sincerely,

Amy Abbott, Director
Residential Care Services

DSHS: *“Partnering with People”*

Resources:

Overall Emergency Preparedness Planning

- Residential Care Services – Resources for Long-Term Care Facilities - Emergency
- NWHRN - Long-Term Care Emergency Response Plan Template
- NWHRN - Resources for Long-Term Care Partners

Wildfire

- Watch Duty
- Washington Department of Natural Resources – Community Wildfire Resilience and Preparedness

Air Quality

- WA Smoke Blog: https://wasmoke.blogspot.com/
- NWHRN - Wildfire smoke tip sheet
- Washington Department of Health - Air Quality – Smoke from Fires

Extreme Heat

- NWHRN - Extreme heat tip sheet
- NWHRN - Extreme heat toolkit
- CDC – Heat Exhaustion and Heat Stroke
- Heat.gov – At Risk: Older Adults

Power Outages

- WA Dept. of Commerce – Energy Division: Public Safety Power Shutoffs in WA
- PSPS Fact Sheet
- Red Cross - Power Outage Checklist