

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**LDH releases report covering heat-related illness, hospitalizations from 2010-2020**

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Baton Rouge, La. (June 15, 2023) — As Louisiana begins to experience high seasonal temperatures, the Louisiana Department of Health (LDH) is reminding residents that extreme heat is dangerous and can be fatal.

Extreme heat can be particularly dangerous after hurricanes. Of the 65 deaths attributed to hurricanes Delta, Zeta, Laura and Ida, 22 were due to heat. An LDH report covering the years before those hurricanes also found that an average of nearly 3,000 people in Louisiana are hospitalized or treated in emergency departments annually due to heat-related illness.

The [report](#), "Heat-Related Illness in Louisiana: Review of Emergency Department and Hospitalization Data from 2010-2020," was created to provide communities with accurate and reliable data on the impacts of extreme heat. Prepared by LDH's [Occupational Health & Injury Surveillance Program](#), the report also found disparities in heat-related illness, with men and Black residents being disproportionately affected.

Men accounted for over 80% of all cases. Heat is an occupational hazard, and men are more likely than women to work in outdoor, physically demanding occupations such as construction, agriculture, landscaping and utilities. Black Louisiana residents had higher rates of hospitalizations.

Parishes with the highest rates of workers with heat-related illness were clustered in North Louisiana. Hospitalizations also increased with age. Older adults are more likely to have chronic health conditions such as diabetes and cardiovascular disease that put them at higher risk for heat-related illness.

The report is part of a five-year, CDC program funded through 2026 that aims to protect Louisiana workers and communities from the dangers of heat through data, research, collaboration and education.

A second report focusing on Orleans Parish is also available [here](#).

Symptoms of heat-related illnesses

Exposure to extreme heat can lead to heat stress resulting in heat-related illness. Heat-related illness occur when the body cannot cool itself enough to maintain a normal temperature. Heat illness occurs along a spectrum; [recognizing the signs](#) is important for prevention.

- **Symptoms of heat exhaustion** can include muscle pain or spasms; cold, pale clammy skin; tiredness or weakness and dizziness; and headache and fainting.

- If you're experiencing these symptoms, move to a cool place and loosen your clothes, put a cool, wet cloth on your body or take a cool bath and sip water. You should seek medical attention for heat exhaustion if you're throwing up and/or if your symptoms last longer than one hour.
- **Symptoms of heat stroke** can include a high body temperature; hot and red or dry or damp skin; fast, strong pulse; dizziness; nausea or vomiting; confusion; and fainting or loss of consciousness.
 - If someone is experiencing heat stroke, call 911 right away, move the person to a cooler place, loosen clothes and cool the person quickly by wetting or applying ice to the neck, armpits and groin areas. Do not give the person anything to drink.

Ways to stay safe

- **Air conditioning** is the strongest protection against heat-related illness. Exposure to air conditioning even for a few hours a day will reduce the risk of health-related illness.
- **Drink plenty of fluids.** Don't wait until you're thirsty. Avoid alcohol, caffeine and sugary drinks.
- **Limit outdoor activity** to morning and evening hours.
- **Stay in the shade.**
- **Check on people who live alone**, especially the elderly.

LDH is also offering free trainings for healthcare providers, public health workers and students, and outdoor workers. These programs discuss heat exposure and its impact on health. For more information on these programs, contact Dr. Alicia Van Doren at avandoren@tulane.edu

About the Louisiana Department of Health

The Louisiana Department of Health strives to protect and promote health statewide and to ensure access to medical, preventive and rehabilitative services for all state residents. The Louisiana Department of Health includes the Office of Public Health, Office of Aging & Adult Services, Office of Behavioral Health, Office for Citizens with Developmental Disabilities, and Healthy Louisiana (Medicaid). To learn more, visit www.ldh.la.gov or follow us on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) or our [blog](#).

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