

GEORGE LATIMER, Westchester County Executive

Date: May 20, 2022

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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WESTCHESTER COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT ISSUES HEAT AND COLD WATER ADVISORY

Advises Residents to Take Care and Avoid Heat Exhaustion and Hypothermia in light of Weekend Forecast

(White Plains, NY) – With temperatures expected to exceed 90 degrees this weekend, but water temperatures still in the 50s, the Westchester County Health Department is cautioning residents about both heat-related illness for vulnerable populations, and cold water safety and the risk of hypothermia.

Health Commissioner Sherlita Amler, MD, said: “Ocean temperatures remain cold, so when a person is fully submerged, hypothermia can happen in as little as 10 minutes, greatly increasing the risk of drowning. It’s also important to take care in the heat. Drink lots of water and seek the shade or air-conditioned places.”

Amler said people who are most vulnerable to adverse effects from the heat include the very young, seniors, people who are obese and those with high blood pressure, heart disease, diabetes or lung conditions.

“Heat stroke and dehydration can take you by surprise,” Amler said. “High humidity, chronic health conditions and some medications can also increase a person’s risk for heat stroke.”

Heat stroke is a serious and life-threatening condition that claims many lives nationwide each year. Symptoms include hot red, dry skin, shallow breathing, a rapid, weak pulse and confusion. Anyone suffering from heat stroke needs to receive emergency medical treatment immediately. Call 911 if you suspect heat stroke and immediately cool the overheated person while waiting for emergency help to arrive.

Amler reminded residents never to leave children, pets or people in a car. Temperatures can quickly rise to unsafe levels, so motorists should always look before they lock their vehicles.

“To avoid tragedy, it’s also vital to never leave infants, children, seniors or pets in a closed car no matter how brief the time,” Amler said. “Closed vehicles can quickly heat up to a life-threatening 140° F or more.”

Another concern during a heat wave is heat exhaustion. Seniors, young children, people who are overweight or who have high blood pressure, people who work outside or in other hot environments are most at risk. Frequent breaks and drinking lots of water can help prevent heat exhaustion. Signs include headache, nausea or vomiting, dizziness and exhaustion, as well as cool, moist, pale or flushed skin. Anyone suffering from heat exhaustion should move out of the sun and apply cool, wet cloths to their skin.

“During a heat wave, seniors, young children and people with compromised immunity especially should avoid vigorous outdoor activity, seek the shade, spend time in air-conditioned locations and drink lots of water throughout the day,” Amler said. “Especially when they’re swimming and playing in the water, children often forget to drink, so parents and caregivers should prompt children to take breaks to hydrate.”

Those who plan to travel by car should prepare their vehicle before hitting the road. Always travel with a spare battery, and avoid leaving radios, phone chargers and other accessories running when the engine is not. Check to make sure your air conditioning is properly functioning and coolant is at the proper level. If you plan to travel in less populated areas, bring water and an umbrella for shade if it becomes necessary to leave the car. Always keep air flowing throughout the vehicle, and try to park in the shade.

For tips to prevent heat-related illness and places to stay cool, residents can visit the Health Department website at www.westchestergov.com/health.

Residents who need a place to cool off can go to an indoor mall. Senior centers, libraries and community centers often serve as cooling centers, but call before you go.

Elevated heat and humidity can also lead to unhealthy levels of ozone, a gas produced by the action of sunlight on organic air contaminants from auto exhaust and other sources. The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation forecasts daily ozone conditions at (<http://www.dec.ny.gov>), or call the New York State Air Quality Hotline at 1-800-535-1345.

The County’s Department of Emergency Services is monitoring the weather forecast, tracking the opening of local Cooling Centers and is in contact with Con Edison and NYSEG concerning the potential for power outages.

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About Westchester County

Westchester County, located in the heart of the historic Hudson Valley, covers 500 square miles and has a population of just over one million. Originally home to Native Americans, who were members of the Lenape tribe, it is today a rich mix of many cultures and landscapes. The County is a blend of bustling cities, quaint villages and picturesque towns as well as open spaces and a network of beautiful parks. Westchester is made up of 6 cities, 19 towns and 20 villages. Westchester County is known for top-notch public schools, and a high quality of life. The County is also an intellectual capital, boasting a highly educated workforce, competitive colleges and universities, Fortune 500 companies, world changing non-profits, and cutting-edge research centers. Westchester is led by County Executive George Latimer, who took office in January 2018 as the ninth County Executive. Using inclusion and openness as a foreground, Latimer is fighting to make Westchester a destination for all people to live, work and enjoy. Learn more about Westchester County by visiting www.westchestergov.com

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