

Blistering heat sears Western US

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Photo: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

Experts offer steps you can take to stay safe as temperatures rise.

(HealthDay)—Temperatures topping 110 and even 120 degrees Fahrenheit have much of the American West sweltering this weekend, and health officials are warning that people must do what they can to stay cool as the heat wave continues.

Temperatures in California's Death Valley hit 122 degrees by 4 p.m. Saturday and could approach 130 degrees on Sunday. Baker, Calif., in the Mojave Desert between Los Angeles and Las Vegas, was baking under 120 degree temperatures, and Palm Springs residents saw the thermometer soar to 122 degrees. In Los Angeles County a record temperature of 111 was recorded at Lancaster Fox Field, *CBS/Associated Press* reported.

National Weather Service meteorologist John Dumas said cooling Pacific Ocean winds haven't been pushing far enough inland to offer many Southern Californians overnight relief.

One man in Las Vegas died due to heat-related causes and another was hospitalized Saturday, authorities said. In both cases the men were found without working air conditioning.

The [heat wave](#) will ebb slowly and is expected to last for the next few days, meteorologists said, and will also hit Utah, Wyoming and other western states, *CBS/Associated Press* reported.

Health experts said there are key steps everyone can take to minimize their risk from extreme heat.

One essential step: Check up on elderly or ill relatives living on their own.

"Due to various reasons, the elderly are prone to suffer from the extreme heat," said Dr. Salvatore Pardo, associate chairman of the emergency department at Long Island Jewish Medical Center in New Hyde Park, N.Y.

"It is vital for loved ones and friendly neighbors to enter the home and make sure they have functioning air conditioning or access to a cool environment—for example, a cooling center, senior center, public shopping mall—during extreme heat events," he said. "This should be done at the beginning, during, and after the [extreme heat](#) event."

Dr. Michael Ammazalorso, chief medical officer at Winthrop-University Hospital in Mineola, N.Y., offered up other potentially lifesaving tips.

Keeping the shades drawn in the daytime can keep homes cooler, he said, and "if you live in a split-level home, stay downstairs. Heat rises, so upstairs will always be hotter than your living room. Open windows upstairs if you have no air conditioning to keep the room cool and have a fan blowing."

Alcoholic beverages dehydrate, so stick to water or beverages without alcohol, lots of sugar or caffeine, Ammazalorso said. Wear light, light-colored and loose clothing to stay cooler.

"Let the children play outside in the early morning or early evening when the air quality is at a healthier level and the temperatures are cooler," he added. "Head to a local swimming pool or beach to cool off, but never swim alone and be sure to observe all posted swimming advisories."

According to Ammazalorso, signs of heat exhaustion include skin that is cool, moist and pale but may look flushed at times. Dizziness or fainting, nausea or vomiting, fatigue and headache are also potential signs of heat exhaustion.

Signs of an even more serious condition known as [heat](#) stroke include red, hot and dry skin, high body temperatures (105 degrees or above), a rapid and weak pulse, rapid and shallow breathing, and changes in consciousness. In these cases, 911 should be dialed immediately, Ammazalorso said.

More information: The U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency has more about [extreme heat](#).

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