

*Attention Senior Centers:
Now is the Time to Prepare for Heat Emergencies!*

Preparation Checklist

HEAT KILLS! During an average summer, 1,500 Americans die from excessive heat. And, older adults are particularly vulnerable. Air conditioning is one of the best protective factors against heat-related illness and death. But to be ready to function as a “Cooling Center” for residents of your community, you must prepare in advance. The time to prepare for a heat emergency is not when the heat wave is about to occur. It’s NOW!

Here are some tips for preparing for Summer 2007 heat emergencies:

Prepare your center

- Plan in advance how your center will respond during a Heat Emergency; put the plan in writing and share with staff, volunteers, and DFTA
- Check your air conditioning units and let DFTA know if there are any problems
- Make arrangements with your staff about coverage for the center in case of extended hours during heat emergencies
- Make arrangements with your landlord, if necessary, to stay open later and/or on weekends during heat emergencies
- Make sure you have a communication plan such as a calling tree with updated emergency contact information and current phone and cell phone numbers
- Decide what additional supplies you will need in a heat emergency and get them early
- Stock up on water and shelf-stable meals for use during extended hours

Prepare seniors

- Educate seniors in your community on the dangers of extreme heat and what they can do to protect themselves, including getting their air conditioners checked out early.
- Survey the members to find out who has air conditioning, how old the conditioner is and who has financial problems that might stop them from using the conditioner
- Let seniors in your center and your community know your center is a designated cooling center and what hours you will be open; educate them to confirm hours during emergencies
- Organize seniors into friendly visiting teams, or establish buddy systems so everyone has someone checking on them during a heat emergency
- Create an Emergency Preparedness Committee of center members that can help educate others about protecting themselves in heat emergencies, publicize your center as a cooling center, and maintain contact with seniors who are particularly vulnerable

Prepare your community

- Work with your interagency council and other service providers (e.g., police, fire, hospitals, libraries, etc.) in your community to develop a coordinated response on a local level
- Reach out to your community and let them know your center operates as a cooling center and that people of all ages are welcome during heat emergencies