



Cochise County Health and Social Services

Public Programs...Personal Service
www.cochise.az.gov

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*** MEDIA RELEASE ***

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: *Tips for a Summer of Safe Outdoor Fun*

As the weather warms up and days get longer, Cochise Health and Social Services encourages everyone to take advantage of the local natural attractions by spending more time outside. But be aware that more outdoor time means certain precautions should be taken to ensure everyone's safety and enjoyment.

Animals May Be More Active Too

When people spend more time out of doors, they are naturally more likely to encounter wild animals. To prevent the spread of rabies and other diseases, Cochise Health and Social Services reminds residents to always use caution when interacting with wild animals, or any animal exhibiting unusual behavior.

"Cochise County has already experienced a three-fold increase this year in the number of animals testing positive for the rabies virus," commented Elizabeth Lueck, Director of Public Health Emergency Preparedness for Cochise County. "Favorable environmental conditions are likely leading to an increase in the overall animal population. All positive rabies test results have been found in bats and skunks, with no positive results in domestic animals," she added.

Rabies is most often transmitted through the bite of a rabid animal. The rabies virus attacks the central nervous system, causing encephalitis, and the condition is always fatal once symptoms appear. Rabies can be prevented in persons who have come into contact or have been bitten by wild animals through prompt administration of anti-rabies vaccine. Hundreds of rabies treatments are initiated annually in Arizona to prevent rabies from developing after exposure.

In Arizona, the principal rabies hosts are bats, skunks, and foxes, although it is possible for other mammal species such as bobcats, coyotes, javelina, cats, dogs, horses, and cows to carry rabies. That is why it is very important to vaccinate all pets and domestic animals against rabies.

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Bats present the most common source of rabies exposures to humans in Arizona because rabid bats often fall to the ground where they are easily accessible to people and pets. Bats are generally not aggressive -- exposure to rabid bats usually occurs when people pick up or handle a sick or dead bat.

Other rabies exposures occur when people try to approach or feed wild animals, or in some cases are attacked by rabid animals such as foxes, bobcats, and skunks. Most rabies exposures can be avoided by simply leaving bats and other wild animals alone. The last documented human rabies death in Arizona was in 1981.

Anyone who may have been exposed to rabies should seek immediate medical attention from their doctor or a hospital emergency department. For further information on rabies prevention, please see <http://www.cdc.gov/rabies/prevention/index.html>.

Summer Heat Can Kill

During periods of seasonally high daytime temperatures, residents are advised to stay cool, stay hydrated, and stay informed. Extremely hot weather can affect your health. On average, 675 deaths from extreme heat events occur each year in the United States. **Most vulnerable are adults age 65 and older, those who work or exercise outdoors, infants and children, the homeless or poor, and people with a chronic medical condition or people on certain medications.**

Take the necessary precautions to prevent serious health effects such as heat exhaustion or heat stroke:

- Drink more than usual, and don't wait until you're thirsty to drink
- **Never** leave another person or pet unattended in a car, even with the windows open -- in direct sunlight, it takes only a few minutes for the internal temperature to increase forty degrees or more above the outside air temperature
- Stay in air-conditioned buildings
- Limit outdoor activity, especially midday when it is the hottest part of the day, and avoid direct sunlight
- Wear loose, lightweight, light-colored clothing
- Take cool showers or baths to lower your body temperature
- Check on at-risk friends, family and neighbors at least twice a day
- Avoid alcohol or liquids containing high amounts of sugar
- Always supply your pet with fresh water and make sure the dish is in the shade; put ice in the dish to keep the water cooler; provide access to shade at all times
- Visit the ADHS Heat Page (<http://www.azdhs.gov/preparedness/epidemiology-disease-control/extreme-weather/index.php#heat-illness>) to find tips for preventing heat sickness

Watch Out for Monsoon Storm Lightning

Summer is the peak season for one of the nation's deadliest weather phenomena -- lightning. The number of lightning strikes peaks in summer, although people are struck year round. In the United States, an average of 49 people are killed each year by lightning, and hundreds more are severely injured. The National Weather Service provides a wide range of information about lightning, including these facts and tips:

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- No outdoor area is safe when you hear thunder – if you hear thunder, find a safe indoor shelter (a substantial building or hard-topped vehicle with the windows up)
- Listen to the weather forecast -- if there is a high chance of thunderstorms, stay inside
- Do not use corded phones, computers, and other electrical equipment
- Avoid plumbing, including sinks, baths, and faucets
- Stay away from porches, windows, and doors
- Never lie on concrete floors or lean against concrete walls

If you're caught outside during a storm with no safe shelter options, take these steps to reduce your risk of being struck by lightning:

- Come down from elevated areas
- Immediately get out and away from pools, ponds, lakes, and other bodies of water
- Never lie flat on the ground
- Never shelter under an isolated tree
- Never use a cliff or rocky overhang for shelter
- Stay away from objects that conduct electricity, such as wire fences, power lines, and windmills

More interesting and helpful facts about lightning may be found at <http://www.lightningsafety.noaa.gov/>.

Healthy and Safe Swimming is a Family Affair

Every day in the United States, two children under the age of 14 years die from drowning. It is the leading cause of injury death for children one to four years old. And every year, thousands of Americans get sick with recreational water illnesses, which are caused by germs found in places where we swim. Healthy and safe swimming means keeping children safe from drowning, as well as preventing the spread of the germs that cause illnesses.

Drowning is preventable, although each year thousands die and more are left with long-term disabilities. To reduce the risk of drowning:

- Make sure everyone knows how to swim, and older children and adults know CPR
- Use life jackets that fit for younger or weaker swimmers
- Provide continuous, attentive supervision close to the swimmers even if there is a lifeguard
- Avoid alcohol and drugs when swimming or watching swimmers
- Install and maintain proper barriers (for pools this means 4-sided fencing and weight-bearing covers)
- Use locks or alarms for windows and doors

For more information about drowning prevention, visit www.cdc.gov/HomeandRecreationalSafety/Water-Safety/index.html.

Recreational water illnesses (like Cryptosporidium, E. Coli, and Giardia) are also preventable, but prevention requires swimmers to take an active role in protecting themselves and other swimmers since some germs can live for several days, even in the best-maintained swimming pools. Simple steps swimmers can take to help prevent the spread of harmful germs include:

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- Don't swim when you have diarrhea -- you can spread germs in the water and make others sick
- Don't swallow pool water -- avoid getting water in your mouth
- Practice good hygiene -- shower with soap before swimming and wash your hands after using the toilet or changing diapers
- Wash young children before swimming (especially their bottoms)
- Check diapers frequently (every 30–60 minutes) in a bathroom or a diaper-changing area and not at poolside
- Take your kids to the bathroom every 30–60 minutes instead of waiting to hear "I have to go" – that may mean it's too late
- Properly chlorinate home swimming pools

For more information about healthy swimming, visit www.cdc.gov/healthyswimming/.

About Cochise Health and Social Services

On behalf of the Board of Supervisors, Cochise Health and Social Services promotes health and quality of life for all Cochise County residents through community partnerships, education, service, and leadership. For more information, including recent media releases, please visit our website at <https://www.cochise.az.gov/health-and-social-services/home>.

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