

Saturday, July 7, 2012

## **State officials mobilize to check on residents**

### ***Ohioans urged to check on those at risk from severe weather***

By HOLLY ZACHARIAH

<http://www.dispatch.com/content/stories/local/2012/07/07/07-state-officials-all-hands-on-deck.html>

The message from state officials this morning is clear: Check on others, and take care of them, in this extraordinary heat.

It's too easy, they said, to assume that someone else will.

The elderly are especially vulnerable, of course. They can be afraid to open their doors and windows for safety, and their homes quickly become hot boxes.

"Knock on doors and say hello. If you have water, share it. If you know where a cooling station is, get your neighbor there," said Ron Hakes, a regional emergency services director with the American Red Cross of Greater Columbus.

Residents are encouraged to take refuge at cooling centers and emergency shelters across the area. "We want you to come, and stay as long as you like," Hakes said.

The American Red Cross can be reached at 614-251-1775 to help anyone find a cool spot. Many libraries are staying open late today to help provide a place to go as well.

In Franklin County, people can go to the Dublin Community Center, any Worthington library and the Worthington Community Center. The Bexley Public Library is open 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. today and 1 to 5 p.m. Sunday. The Westerville Senior Center, 310 W. Main St., is open until 4:30 p.m. today. The Plain Township Fire Department, 9500 Johnstown Rd., New Albany, is open until 7 p.m. today.

Full-service shelters include Peace Lutheran Church, 455 Clark State Rd., Gahanna, and Maple Street United Methodist Church, 438 E. Wheeling St., Lancaster.

Local fire stations also will have information about where people can go to stay cool.

The heat wave has already proven deadly for the sick: two elderly women and one man have already died this week in Licking County.

Those still without power are of particular concern: As of 10 a.m., 62,000 AEP Ohio customers remain without electricity and the temperature today is expected to reach 104 degrees.

So at a press conference this morning, Gov. John Kasich and members of his administration said teams have been mobilized all across the state to check on as many people as possible.

Church groups, university students, emergency-management officials, the Ohio National Guard, Red Cross volunteers – just about anyone who is free – is being called upon to help.

The director of the Ohio Department of Health said doctors have been asked to check on the most vulnerable patients known to their practices.

The director of the Ohio Department of Aging said those who run programs for the homebound are personally checking on every person of which they are aware.

Today, reverse 911 calls are being made reminding people of how to stay safe, and checking on folks.

“We have a lot of boots on the ground,” said Bonnie Kantor-Burman, director of the Ohio Department of Aging. And she issued a caution about how to check on the elderly.

“These elders are the ones who built our great country and our great state. They are fiercely proud and independent. Dependency is something they are fearful of,” she said, adding that they often turn strangers – even kind ones offering help – away. “So we have to find who is closest to them so that the knock on their door is answered.”

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