

Andover EMS

By John Kinney
Andover EMS Chief

As we approach the summer season, I'm reminded that we had a few episodes involving heat exhaustion last year. After the cool damp month of June 2010, we all seemed very happy to be out in the sunshine and warmth of July. During our town's celebrations on July Fourth, temperatures reached over 90 degrees, and the members of Andover EMS knew that we had to take a proactive position against heat-related health conditions.

EMT-B Heather Makechnie was armed with cases of cool water and began her patrol of the Village Green before noon. She was soon making many pleas to some residents to slow down, take a rest in a shady spot, and drink plenty of water. Heather isn't just a kind person; it's her training and knowledge of heat-related illness that was behind her concern and actions.

Basic Heat Facts

Here are some basic facts about your body's reaction to heat to keep in mind.

Heat exhaustion is a form of hyperthermia, an abnormally elevated body temperature that can develop when you are exposed to high temperatures and become dehydrated, usually from not drinking enough fluids. It also can happen when large volumes of sweat are replaced with fluids that don't contain enough salt or electrolytes.

Those most prone to heat exhaustion are children; the elderly; people with high blood-pressure; people working or exercising in a hot environment; individuals suffering chronic illness or

disability; obese people; people who have been drinking alcohol; or pregnant women.

Warning signs of heat exhaustion include thirst, fatigue, dizziness, headache, heavy sweating, muscle or abdominal cramps, nausea or vomiting, and fainting. The skin may be cool and moist. The victim's pulse rate will likely be fast and weak, and breathing may be rapid and shallow.

If heat exhaustion is untreated, it may progress to heat stroke, which is a medical emergency. Heat stroke can involve organ failure and other conditions unfavorable to life. Seek medical attention and call 911 immediately if symptoms are severe, or the victim has heart problems or has a history of high blood pressure.

Beat The Heat

Otherwise, help the victim cool off and seek medical attention if symptoms worsen or last longer than an hour. Techniques that help cooling are drinking more water than usual (avoid alcohol or caffeinated beverages); frequent rests in shady, cool, or air-conditioned spaces; wearing loose, lightweight clothing; and misting with cooling by a fan.

Members of Andover EMS will be on the Village Green again this Fourth of July, so please stop by and chat, have a rest, drink some water, and let us practice taking vital signs. Take your pick of temperature, pulse, blood pressure, oxygen saturation level, respiratory rate, lung sounds, skin condition, or all of the above. It can be a win-win visit for everyone involved.

East Andover Fire Department

By Rene Lefebvre
Chief, East Andover Fire Department

July is a very busy time for your fire department and for many other folks in Andover. Our first event is the Fourth of July celebration. We will be there with our tent set up on the Village Green. The team has a very nice Old Town canoe at the station ready to raffle, and our snow cone machine is cleaned and ready to make a refreshing treat.

We are all looking for a warm dry day and a large gathering of people to enjoy our community. On the business side, we will have medical and fire equipment staged should the need arise.

The celebration on the Fourth is the result of a lot of very hard work and planning. We all owe a large "Thank you!" to the committee members who labor behind the scenes to make our celebration such a popular event.

Chicken Barbecue

Our second event is our annual chicken barbecue. Please mark your calendar for Saturday, July 30, at the East Andover Fire Station. We will serve from 5 to 7 PM. The canoe will be raffled off at 7 PM. We plan to offer a good meal, good conversation, and a very pleasant place to eat. This gathering has become, for many, a must-attend event each summer. The support shown by you is a major recharge for our drive to provide our town with the best emergency services possible.

Andover Fire Departments

Combining operations for the two fire departments is going very well. Thinking like one department takes a bit of doing, but acting like one is getting easier.

Combined training feels like normal training. The fire service has a long history of working very well as one large team at multiple alarm incidents. That spirit is alive and well in Andover. Training separately would now seem foreign and much less productive.

We have two people interested in becoming firefighters. Both are certified fire fighters that have moved to our town. It is not often that trained and experienced people walk into your station almost ready to fight fire. We will train them to our methods and equipment and will welcome them to the hot seat soon.

This is July, a warm, lazy time with the memory of snow and ice slowly fading. It is a time to just let down and be at peace. I will not spoil your easy time with a message of safety. Well ... maybe just a short note.

If you plan to attend, and I hope you do, the Fourth of July celebration on the Village Green, drink some water. It is likely to be hot out there. Some are not used to all that heat and sun. Water is the great equalizer for most people. That's all: drink water, enjoy the shade at our tent, and have a great time.



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