Summer 2000 "officially" begins in the Northern Hemisphere on Tuesday, June 20th. But in some parts of the United States, summer begins in March or April, and lasts well into September or October.

With summer comes hot weather, an increase in outdoor activities, and an increase in heat-related deaths and injuries. Fact is, on the average more people are killed by heat each year than by tornadoes or hurricanes.

An easy rule-of-thumb to remember this summer, and especially over the long summer holiday weekends, is "when the temperature goes up, slow down." So if you're golfing, jogging, playing tennis, fishing or boating, or just enjoying our nation's great outdoors, remember these simple safety rules and make your summer holiday outing more enjoyable.

• **Slow down.** Heed your body's early warnings. Reduce your activities and stay in a cool, shady or air-conditioned place as much as possible.

• **Don't dry out.** Drink plenty of non-alcoholic liquids while the hot spell lasts. Doctors recommend a glucose replacement drink for those who are outside for more than an hour or two. But if this is not available, a good substitute is plain water. And drink water often, even if you are not thirsty.

• **Dress for hot weather.** Wear lightweight, light-colored and loose-fitting clothing to help maintain normal body temperature. A hat or cap, and sunglasses, are a must if prolonged exposure to the sun's rays and glare is anticipated.

• **Avoid thermal shock.** Go slow for those first few hot days. Heatstroke frequently develops swiftly with little warning. Over half of heatstroke victims become ill less than 24 hours before being hospitalized or found dead.

• **Get out of the heat** as much as possible for at least a few hours each day. If your residence is not air-conditioned, get to an air-conditioned environment for at least a few hours a day. A shopping mall is an excellent place in which to escape the heat of summer. If this is not possible, a well-ventilated, shady area will do.

• **Don't get too much sun.** Sunburn makes the body's job of heat dissipation more difficult. Besides a hat, sunglasses and proper clothing, a good sun screening agent is recommended.

• **Beware of high humidity.** Perspiration is your body's natural way of cooling your skin. When the humidity is low, evaporation actually "cools" your skin. Air movement, such as with a breeze or fan, acts to evaporate perspiration and cool your body. But when the humidity is high, this evaporative cooling process is lost, and the danger of heat-related illness or death is greatly increased. (Ed. The elderly are especially at risk since their body's capability to feel the heat and to perspire decreases with aging.)

• **Check frequently on the elderly and sick.** During periods of hot weather, they can be affected, and suffer, the most, especially if they live in non-air-conditioned buildings, or in urban areas, or heavily-populated downtown areas of large cities. A trip to the nearest mall, or a ride on an air-conditioned bus, can provide much-needed relief from the heat of summer. (Ed. Those that live alone are especially at risk.)

During periods of high temperature coupled with high humidity, National Weather Service Offices throughout the U.S. will routinely broadcast the "heat stress index" in forecasts, special releases, and over NOAA Weather Radio (NWR) broadcasting on VHF frequencies between 162.400 MHz and 162.550 MHz. Local radio and TV stations, plus The Weather Channel, CNN and many other news/weather channels will also broadcast the "heat stress index," as well as hourly temperatures and the relative humidity.

To obtain an “apparent temperature chart” and/or related summer heat wave brochure, contact the National Weather Service Office nearest you. Or surf to the Web site of the National Weather Service at: www.nws.noaa.gov.

So whether you’re 6 or 60, follow the safety rules of summer and play it smart, especially over those long hot holiday weekends. In the vernacular of today’s teenagers, “Be Cool!”

P.S. **Don't forget your pets,** they are subject to the same dangers posed by hot weather as we humans. Make sure they have a cool, shady, well-ventilated place in which to rest during the heat of the day and provide them with a good supply of fresh, cool water.
HEAT INDEX CHART

Below is a Heat Index or Apparent Temperature Chart, courtesy of the National Weather Service, showing how hot it really feels when relative humidity (%) is combined with the actual air temperature (°F).

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To use the chart, read current temperature at the left and current humidity at top, then follow down the chart to find the Heat Index. For example, with a temperature of 95 degrees Fahrenheit and a relative humidity of 55 percent, the intersection of the two values on the chart will give a Heat Index (or H.I.) of 110.

The effects of Heat Index (H.I.) values are as follows:

- **H.I. 80 to 90**: Fatigue **POSSIBLE** with prolonged exposure and/or physical activity.
- **H.I. 90 to 105**: Sunstroke, heat cramps and heat exhaustion **POSSIBLE** with prolonged exposure and/or physical activity.
- **H.I. 105 to 130**: Sunstroke, heat cramps or heat exhaustion **LIKELY**. Heatstroke **POSSIBLE** with prolonged exposure and/or physical activity.
- **H.I. 130 or higher**: Heatstroke/sunstroke **HIGHLY LIKELY** with continued exposure.

Heat Index values were devised for shady, light wind conditions. Exposure to full sunshine can increase these values by up to 15 degrees Fahrenheit. Also, strong winds, particularly with very hot, dry air, can be extremely dangerous.

First Aid Treatment suggestions for heat-related illnesses can be obtained from local Red Cross Offices, hospitals and clinics, public health agencies, and physicians. (Ed. The American Red Cross has a brochure on "Are You Ready for a Heat Wave?" It is on the Internet at: www.redcross.org/disaster/safety/heat.html. The American Red Cross and The Weather Channel have joined in a national safety and education preparedness and relief initiative called "Project SafeSide Keeping You Ahead Of The Storm." The SafeSide information on extreme heat can be viewed on the Web site: www.weather.com/safeside/heat/index.html.)