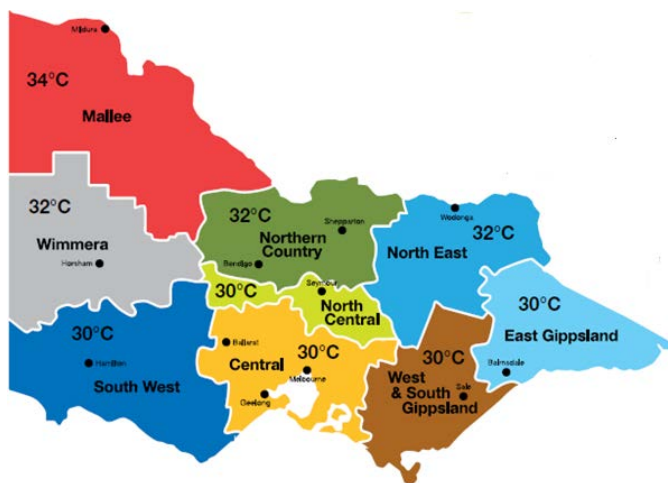


In Victoria, a heatwave is generally defined as a **period of abnormally and uncomfortably hot weather** that could impact on human health, community infrastructure and services. Once forecast average temperatures are predicted to reach or exceed the heat health temperature threshold for a specific weather forecast district, the Department of Health and Human Services will issue a heat health alert for that district.



The average temperature for any given day is the average of the forecast daily maximum temperature and the forecast overnight temperature (which is the daily minimum for the following day).

The heat health temperature threshold for ECMS services is calculated at 30 degrees (Central District).

The most common causes of death seen during heatwaves are related to: cardiac conditions; asthma and other respiratory illness; kidney disease; diabetes; nervous system diseases; and cancer. Young children have been identified as a vulnerable group who are likely to be most affected by heat.

### What we need to do

Once a heatwave has been declared ECMS requires its staff to:

- Ensure everyone (children and educators) drink plenty of water, even if you do not feel thirsty (if your doctor normally limits your fluids, check how much to drink during hot weather).
- Limit or restrict outdoor bases activities and spend as much time as possible in cool or air-conditioned buildings
- Block out the sun during the day by closing curtains and blinds. Open windows when there is a cool breeze.
- Do not leave children, adults or animals in parked vehicles.
- Stay out of the sun during the hottest part of the day and follow the sun smart policy
- Offer smaller meals more often and eat cold meals such as salads. Make sure food that needs refrigeration is properly stored.

<sup>1</sup> Department of Health – Heatwave plan for Victoria

## First Aid for heat related illnesses

Heat-related illness occurs when the body is unable to adequately cool itself. Heat-related illness can range from mild conditions, such as a rash or cramps, to very serious conditions, such as heat stroke, which may be fatal.

Prevention is the best way to manage heat-related illness. Heat cramps are muscle pains or spasms, usually in the abdomen, arms or legs. They may occur as a result of strenuous activity in a hot environment because the loss of salt in sweat affects muscle relaxation. Heat cramps may also be a symptom of heat exhaustion.

Heat exhaustion is a serious condition that can develop into heat stroke. It occurs as result of dehydration, with poor blood flow affecting the brain and heart.

Illness	Symptoms	What to do
<b>Heat cramps</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Muscle pains</li><li>• Spasms in the abdomen, arms or legs</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Stop activity and sit quietly in a cool place</li><li>• Increase fluid intake</li><li>• Rest a few hours before returning to activity</li><li>• Seek medical help if cramps persist</li></ul>
<b>Heat exhaustion</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Pale complexion and sweating</li><li>• Rapid heart rate</li><li>• Muscle cramps, weakness</li><li>• Dizziness, headache</li><li>• Nausea, vomiting</li><li>• Fainting</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Get the person to a cool area and lie them down</li><li>• Remove outer clothing</li><li>• Wet skin with cool water or wet cloths</li><li>• Seek medical advice</li></ul>
<b>Heat stroke</b> (a life-threatening emergency)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Same symptoms as heat exhaustion</li><li>• Dry skin with no sweating</li><li>• Mental condition worsens, confusion</li><li>• Seizure</li><li>• Appear to have a stroke or collapse</li><li>• Unconsciousness</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Call an ambulance</li><li>• Get the person to a cool area and lie them down</li><li>• Remove clothing</li><li>• Wet the skin with water, fanning continuously</li><li>• Position an unconscious person on their side and clear their airway</li></ul>