

July 8, 2010

EMS promotes sun safety practices during Stampede

CALGARY – Alberta Health Services EMS reminds residents and visitors heading outdoors to enjoy the sights and sounds of Stampede to protect themselves and their families from the harmful effects of the sun. With rising temperatures, there is an increased risk of heat-related illness such as heat exhaustion or sunstroke.

“With temperatures forecast to be 25 degrees Celsius and higher, it’s a good time to remind everyone that precautions can and should be taken to stay healthy and safe,” says Scott Holland, EMS Supervisor – Special Operations.

To avoid sunburns and heat-related illness, EMS recommends:

- Applying a sunscreen that screens out both UVA and UVB rays and has a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 15. Apply it 20 minutes before going outside and reapply frequently.
- Wearing a wide-brimmed hat and sunglasses (with a UVA/UVB CSA certified seal). If possible, wear long pants and long-sleeved shirts that cover skin.
- Drinking lots of water and other non-alcoholic, non-caffeinated beverages to stay hydrated.

If you feel dizzy, nauseous and faint, you may be suffering from heat exhaustion. Drink plenty of water and get into a shaded area. Keep in mind that children and the elderly are particularly susceptible to heat exhaustion and dehydration.

Hot weather can also cause heat stroke. Symptoms include high body temperature, lack of sweat, disorientation, fainting, and unconsciousness. Move the person to a shaded area, remove their outer clothing and shoes, wrap them in a wet towel, and get medical attention as soon as possible.

To ensure prompt medical attention is available in the Calgary downtown core throughout Stampede, EMS will be utilizing the Rapid Access Paramedic (RAP) mountain bike team.

“RAP is able to respond to medical emergencies that may occur in large public gatherings where an ambulance may have difficulty accessing a patient due to crowds,” says EMS’s Holland, citing examples of breakfasts or corporate public functions.

To decrease the risk of sunburn for those who forget to apply sunscreen prior to going out, RAP team members will have a supply available upon request.

Alberta Health Services is the provincial health authority responsible for planning and delivering health supports and services for more than 3.7 million adults and children living in Alberta. Its mission is to provide a patient-focused, quality health system that is accessible and sustainable for all Albertans.

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