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Cool centers offer relief from heat for many during COVID-19 pandemic

With temperatures expected to remain in the triple digits through portions of Riverside County, cool centers are providing some relief from the heat during the coronavirus epidemic.

The 15 cool centers are open to the public at no cost and have served about 5,800 visitors since opening June 1. The centers will be available through October as temperatures warrant.

“These triple-digit temperatures can cause some serious health issues, particularly for those among the most vulnerable populations, like seniors,” said Kim Saruwatari, director of Public Health. “Safety precautions in the time of coronavirus are being implemented to further protect visitors.”

Among the safety guidelines, all visitors and staff at the cooling centers will be asked to wear face coverings and practice social distancing. Visitors are screened before entering and those who show symptoms may be provided an alternative location to cool off. Those who have been confirmed positive for coronavirus will not be allowed into cool centers, but can use the utility assistance program (951-955-4900) to help pay the extra cost of operating their air conditioner for longer periods.

High temperatures can be hazardous for many people, especially for the elderly and those with medical conditions. Heat-related injuries such as heatstroke, an illness that occurs when the body can no longer regulate its temperature, can strike fast and pose life-threatening consequences.

The cool centers are coordinated by the Community Action Partnership of Riverside County, in conjunction with Riverside University Health System – Public Health, and are in schools, senior and community centers. Light refreshments and water will be available at some locations. For a list of cool center locations, visit www.capriverside.org.

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