

Heat Wave. Measures to be Taken by the Population

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France faces as a true national emergency the heat wave, without precedents for a month of June, that already began to be felt yesterday and that will reach its maximum level between Thursday and Saturday of this week. The authorities take preventive measures and alert the population to avoid what happened in 2003. A prolonged and intense canicular episode, but without the humidity that is expected now, caused that year about 15,000 deaths.

In more than 50 departments the orange alert was already decreed. This includes Paris and the populated towns that surround it. In the capital there will be refrigerated rooms for vulnerable people in municipal facilities, opening of parks at night hours, installation of water sprays in some streets and other measures. Temperatures near 40 degrees - and even higher at some points - are expected in almost the entire Hexagon. Only the region of Brittany will escape the torrid heat. A high level of humidity is added to the African air mass, because the soil is still not as dry as in the middle of summer, so the temperature of sensation can reach 47 degrees in Paris. Meteorologists believe that record temperatures can be reached, beyond any known record. Yesterday it was aimed at the town of Carpentras, northeast of Avignon, as one of the potentially hottest places. Yesterday they touched the 37 degrees but it is feared that, at the height, the thermometer will climb up to 44.

The canicular episode of 2003 resulted in 15,000 deaths; this time there will be more humidity.

The President of the Republic, Emmanuel Macron, who was yesterday in Marseille, promised "the mobilization of the whole Government" to mitigate the effects of the meteorological phenomenon on citizens. The head of state plans to travel to Japan, so the prime responsibility for managing the crisis will be assumed by the Prime Minister, Édouard Philippe. The Minister of Health, Agnès Buzyn and the Minister of Education, Jean-Michel Blanquer, intervened before the media to make recommendations and announce measures.

The heat wave comes at a time of conflict between the health personnel, especially those who work in the emergency services, who already in a normal situation are overwhelmed and have taken a strike to demand better working conditions. Buzyn called for individual responsibility, for people to make use of common sense and take obvious minimal precautions such as getting enough hydration, avoiding sun exposure and intense physical exercise with high temperatures, and not drinking alcoholic beverages. The minister also appealed to collective solidarity. "It's a time to be especially supportive," said Buzyn, and called on citizens to take care of their elderly neighbors, the many elderly people living alone, especially in large cities, taking an interest in their state and calling services social groups if they consider it necessary.

The education minister announced that the exams scheduled this week for 800,000 secondary school students are canceled, for safety and health reasons. It has been considered imprudent to have the students, for four hours, in high-temperature buildings. The tests will be carried out next week, after the heat wave. In the case of families who already had vacation reservations, students will be able to take the exams in mid-September.

Simple and cheap measures to avoid deaths from heat waves.

Episodes of extreme heat are becoming more common and severe, but they are also easily predictable. And the plans of emergency before a heat wave are not only easy to implant but also tremendously effective, according to a new study by James Temple | translated by Mariana Díaz May 08, 2018.

Heat waves are among the deadliest natural disasters in the world (see “Geoengineering will come after some great event, like a great wave of deadly heat”). In the United States they have killed more people than the sum of victims of hurricanes, tornadoes and earthquakes. And it seems that they are only going to get worse, since climate change caused by humans increases their frequency and intensity (see Signs that climate change completely lost control in 2017). How can we prepare for a future dominated by lethal heat waves? The good news is that both hot and cold periods are easily predictable, and that “systems of early action in the face of extreme temperatures have shown that they can save lives around the world,” according to an article published last week in *Environmental Research Letters*.

After analyzing the weather forecast models, the researchers discovered that almost 5,000 million people live in regions where it is easy to forecast extreme temperatures. So even if the temperature can not be controlled, this information offers an opportunity to establish early warning systems and action plans. The study notes that in the midst of a heat wave, rescue personnel can provide drinking water, establish cooling shelters and care for vulnerable citizens, especially the elderly.

The head of the climate science team at the Red Cross and Red Crescent Climate Center, and lead author of the report, Erin Coughlan de Pérez, says: “We have the capacity to avoid a lot of suffering, illnesses and deaths from waves of heat and cold waves all over the world, we should be able to take action and adapt in many places”.

The study, in which researchers from the University of Columbia (USA), the Free University of Amsterdam (the Netherlands) and other institutions have participated, has not analyzed which part of these regions already has some kind of information system. Alert or response plans. “But it’s safe to assume that in many of those places could be improved,” says Coughlan de Pérez. His group did the study in part because the Red Cross wanted to know where extreme temperature events could be predicted with adequate warning so rescue teams would have time to respond.

Coughlan de Pérez is optimistic about the usefulness of these programs, partly because they are not really that expensive. Much of the work involves distributing water and communicating with people to take the problem seriously. Then you will not have to do much more than stay indoors and stay hydrated. But many people do not realize the danger of high temperatures. Direct and immediate effects include cramping, exhaustion and heat stroke, which can quickly lead to death if the person is not immediately treated. And the study points out that in many cities mortality rates increase by 5% on days of heat waves. Children, the elderly and pregnant women are particularly vulnerable to these temperature changes. Extreme heat can also aggravate droughts and forest fires, widen global economic disparities, trigger greater violence and reduce a person’s lifetime income (see Current global warming is already reducing the future capabilities of our children).

However, the achievements of the short-term response plans are clearly limited. As global temperatures continue to rise in the coming years, more extensive changes in infrastructure and practices will be needed. It is expected that more and more people will have air conditioning, both due to the increase in temperatures and the fact that that more and more people can afford it. The United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change predicts that the demand for power for air conditioning will increase by a factor of more than 30 by 2100; This will undermine any major effort to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Many cities will need to undergo major adaptations, such as the deployment of building materials that divert heat, the planting of more trees or the designation of community cooling centers such as cities such as Boston (USA), Chicago (USA). UU.) And New York (USA) have established. However, another recent study published in the *Environmental Research Letters* indicates that in the middle and end of the century, the temperature and humidity levels could exceed the theoretical limits of human tolerance, which could make some parts of the planet uninhabitable [1].

Bibliography

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