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To: Regional Resilience Directors & all non-NHS Category 1 & 2 responders

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH HEATWAVE PLAN

The DH Heatwave Plan for England, first published in 2004, was reissued on 14 May 2007 to raise both public and professional awareness. The Plan, its accompanying factsheets and public information leaflet are available on the DH website at: www.dh.gov.uk/publications. The Plan's purpose is to enhance resilience in the event of a heatwave and is seen as an important component of overall emergency planning.

The Plan places direct responsibility for its implementation upon strategic health authority (SHA) and local authority (LA) chief executives (CEs), and the following have also been made directly aware of the Plan and its requirements:

HPA CE; PCT and Trust CEs; CSCI CE; DPHs; GPs; PCT lead nurses; Directors of Social Services; Directors of Housing and Planning; Directors of Adult Services; Directors of Children's Services; Professional Bodies (RCGP, RCP, RPSGB, RCN, CPHVA, Community and District Nurses Association) and Care Associations (National Care Association, ECCA, Registered Nursing Homes Association and Carers UK).

The purpose of this letter is to inform all Regional Resilience Directors and all non-NHS Category 1 & 2 responders of the Plan, its requirements and its accompanying advice and guidance. As detailed above, the Plan is available on the DH website and all recipients of this letter are encouraged to circulate the link to all those they feel may have an interest.

Following an evaluation of the 2006 Plan, changes have been made to this year's Plan. These include: increased background detail; greater clarity of alert levels; an emphasis on long-term planning; the creation of 'cool rooms' in residential and care homes and recommendations that NHS Trusts are able to maintain their hospitals at temperatures below 26C.

The Plan sets out the arrangements that will apply, and the actions required, in advance of, and during, a heatwave and the importance of preparation prior to a heatwave occurring. You will wish to be aware that there will also be a national distribution of leaflets to the public via GP surgeries and high street pharmacies etc.

SHAs and LAs are required to ensure that:

- PCTs and social services departments support primary and social care teams in:
 - familiarising themselves with the Plan, and their roles in implementing it; and
 - identifying individuals at particular risk, and taking steps as set out in the Plan to reduce it - this will involve collaboration with the voluntary sector and the Independent Care Home sector.
- Independent Care Homes and Hospitals are made aware of the Plan, of the specific risks associated with residents of care homes, and of the specific advice directed at Care Home Managers and Staff.
- NHS Trusts, including Mental Health Trusts, have assessed their ability to maintain their temperatures below 26⁰C in order to reduce risk to vulnerable groups. In the French 2003 heatwave, 2,000 of the 15,000 deaths were among those already in hospital at its start.
- Local Authority Housing and Planning teams, and providers of social housing, take account of long-term measures to reduce the impact of heatwaves. This includes increasing external and internal shading and use of reflective paints.
- All local emergency plans and procedures incorporate the Plan where relevant, and those involved in their implementation, including local resilience fora, are made familiar with it.

If you wish to discuss any policy elements of the Plan, you should contact Dr Jo Nurse on 01483 88 2866 or Jo.Nurse@dh.gsi.gov.uk. For operational issues, you should contact Paul Lees on 020 7210 5199 or Paul.lees@dh.gsi.gov.uk.

Yours sincerely,

PAUL LEES
DH Emergency Preparedness Division

Local response gateway: preparing together