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## **NEWS RELEASE**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **BE PREPARED FOR THE HEAT**

HANFORD - The Kings County Health Department reminded residents today that summer's hot temperatures are just ahead. People living in Kings County are very familiar with the San Joaquin Valley's typical hot dry summer weather and most people adapt to the heat within a couple of weeks. The proliferation of air conditioning in homes, schools, businesses and vehicles has certainly made the heat much more bearable than what previous generations had to endure.

High temperatures of 100° F to 104° F are common here and rarely cause health problems, especially given the usual low humidity in the Valley. However, extreme heat with temperatures much above 105° F can be life-threatening. Kings County Health Officer Dr. Michael Mac Lean, stated that in the last ten years, heat waves have resulted in more weather-related fatalities in the U.S. annually than any other natural disaster (about 400 deaths per year). Global climate change may increase the risk to human health due to heat. July 2006 was the second hottest July on record. The National Weather Service reported that temperatures exceeded 110° F in Hanford on four consecutive days that month. That July heat wave resulted in the deaths of at least 140 people in California. Dr. Mac Lean emphasized that these deaths could have been prevented.

Kings County has just adopted an Extreme Heat Emergency Plan. The plan includes a list of cool places in each community – air conditioned locations willing to accept people trying to avoid extreme heat. It includes guidelines for Kings County to declare a local heat emergency when daytime temperatures are predicted to exceed 105° F for at least two days and not drop below 80° F at night. When activated, the plan would inform residents

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about the locations of cool places they can go to and recommend curtailment of outdoor activities when possible.

Dr. Mac Lean pointed out that some people are especially susceptible to the effects of heat, including people over 65 years of age, very young children less than a year old, people doing outside work or participating in outdoor sports, overweight persons, and people with certain medical conditions or who are taking certain medications. To avoid heat-related illness during extreme heat waves, individuals are urged to take the following precautions:

- Use your air conditioner at least four hours a day or visit air conditioned buildings.
- Take cool showers.
- Run fans with a mist.
- Open your windows for a few hours in the evening when the temperature cools down.
- Wear cool, light-colored clothing.
- Go for a swim.
- Ask your health care provider if your medications or health conditions increase your risk to excessive heat.
- Drink water – at least three to four quarts a day. Don't rely on your thirst to tell you when to drink.
- In the event of an electric power outage, there may be no tap water available. Store a 3 to 5 day supply of water at a gallon per person per day. Use food-grade plastic or glass containers for storing water.