

Title: Firefighters urge residents to help prevent avoidable emergencies

Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service is urging residents to take extra care during this week's Red Extreme Heat Warning, with temperatures forecast to reach up to 40°C and an increased risk of water-related incidents and wildfires.

The warning, issued by the Met Office and UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA), is in place from 9am Wednesday until 9pm Thursday. During this period, residents are being encouraged to avoid unnecessary risks around open water, barbecues and dry open spaces and to take simple steps to stay safe in the heat.

Deputy Chief Fire Officer Simon Tuffley said:

"A Red Extreme Heat Warning is rare and should be taken seriously. We're asking everyone to make safe choices over the coming days, as small actions can have serious consequences in these conditions, but many incidents are entirely preventable if we all play our part.

Our crews will be ready to respond, but we'd much rather everyone enjoy the warm weather safely. By following the advice and looking out for one another, we can help keep ourselves, our communities and our emergency responders safe – making a difference together."

Periods of extreme heat can place additional pressure on emergency services and increase the likelihood of preventable incidents. National evidence shows these risks rise significantly during hot weather. During the 2022 heatwave, firefighters in England attended almost three times as many serious outdoor fires as the previous year, demonstrating how quickly dry conditions can escalate into emergencies. Research by Bournemouth University has also found that accidental drowning fatalities are three times higher on days when temperatures reach 25°C or above compared to the seasonal average.

Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service is preparing for an increase in demand during the warning period by reviewing operational resourcing and ensuring specialist equipment used to respond to water-related incidents and wildfires is available if required. Residents can play an important role by following safety advice and helping to prevent avoidable incidents.

Residents are being asked to follow this advice:

Water safety

- Avoid entering open water to cool down.
- Never enter the water to attempt a rescue.
- If you see someone in difficulty, call 999 immediately.
- If it is safe to do so, throw something that floats and encourage them to Float to Live.

Fire safety

- Avoid using disposable barbecues in parks, fields and open spaces.
- Keep barbecues away from dry grass, fences, sheds and trees.
- Dispose of cigarettes responsibly.
- Do not leave glass bottles or litter in direct sunlight.
- Avoid bonfires during this period of extreme heat.

Heat health

- Stay hydrated throughout the day.
- Avoid strenuous activity during the hottest part of the day where possible.
- Check in on family, friends and neighbours who may be more vulnerable.

Further safety advice is available at: www.bucksfire.gov.uk/safety-hub/