



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**For additional information contact:**

**Lisa LaPlante at (616) 632-7182 or [Lisa.LaPlante@kentcountymi.gov](mailto:Lisa.LaPlante@kentcountymi.gov)**

**PLAY IT SAFE THIS INDEPENDENCE DAY!  
MAKE SURE THE FOURTH OF JULY IS HEALTHY AND FUN**

GRAND RAPIDS – The Independence Day forecast calls for FUN this year, and the Kent County Health Department is working to make sure everyone has a healthy, safe holiday. A few tips can make the day – as well as your entire summer – safe and sound.

1. **HEAT HAZARDS** – Hot, humid weather will remain in Kent County through the week. Children, the elderly, and pets are especially at risk. Never leave children or animals in a parked vehicle unattended, even with windows cracked open. If you know elderly adults, check on them twice a day during these hot days. Drink cold, non-alcoholic beverages to stay well-hydrated – water is your best bet! If someone appears to be suffering from dizziness, muscle weakness/cramping, vomiting, heavy sweating, or paleness, they may be suffering from heat exhaustion. Get them to a cool area, and medical treatment as soon as possible.
2. **BARBEQUE BASICS** – Lots of families plan to eat outdoors – grilling, picnics and more – and in these extreme temperatures, it won't take long for some foods to go bad. Foods with mayonnaise or other dairy products should be kept at 40-degrees or colder, and discard them after one hour if they have been sitting out in the heat. Use a meat thermometer to make sure you are cooking meat until it is done – 165-degrees for poultry, 160-degrees for ground meats (other than poultry) and 145-degrees for beef, pork and lamb. Make sure you keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold!
3. **FIREWORK FUN AND DRY DANGERS** – The best approach is to leave it to the professionals – take your children to a fireworks show this year, especially with the dry conditions we've seen in Kent County over the past month. Make sure you keep water nearby to extinguish fireworks quickly. Changes in Michigan Law mean lots of people will be using fireworks that were previously illegal. Emergency room doctors are concerned about the potential for more injuries. Make sure adults are cautiously lighting fireworks, or supervising the use of fireworks by teens. Never let children light fireworks. If a wick dies before the item goes off, do not approach it, and don't try to re-light it - put it in a bucket of water twenty minutes later. And remember, fireworks and alcohol don't mix!

(MORE)

KCHD has been in the business of providing health services to Kent County since 1931. The Health Department is home to nearly 260 employees including public health nurses, sanitarians, health educators, technicians, public health administrators, and specialized staff at the Kent County Animal Shelter. The Health Department operates one main clinic and four satellite clinics located in Wyoming, Kentwood, Rockford, and Grand Rapids. To learn more about KCHD services, visit [www.accesskent.com/health](http://www.accesskent.com/health).

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HEALTH DEPARTMENT  
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4. WATER WORRIES – Trying to beat the heat may take you to your local river, pond or beach. It takes a matter of seconds for a child to drown, even in shallow water. Always supervise children when near water, even when they are wearing personal floatation devices. Check for water hazards before heading to the beach (i.e. red flag warnings, *e coli* levels) to make sure you know about any potential dangers.

5. SKIN SCOOP – Make sure you are protecting your skin while celebrating the Fourth! Wear sunscreen and insect repellent. Make sure you read and follow the labels on both to make sure you are using items that are good for your skin. Use extra caution for children three and under – some sunscreens and repellents are not suitable for younger children.

The many nurses, sanitarians and staff of the Kent County Health Department hope these tips will help everyone have a safe, healthy Independence Day. Please feel free to contact KCHD for more information or interviews on this and other summer health topics.

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700 FULLER AVE. NE, GRAND RAPIDS, MI 49503